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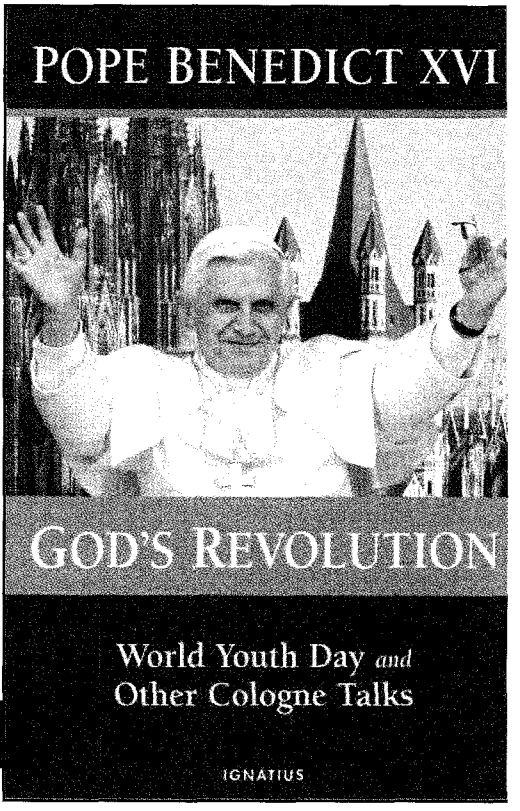

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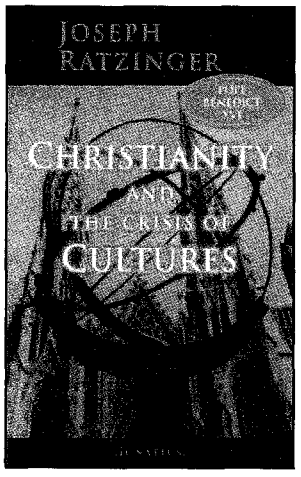

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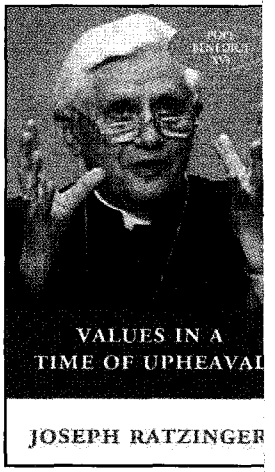

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FIRST THINGS

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Godly Science

Michael Behe's elucidation of the social pressures on Catholic scientists to conform to a naturalistic explanation for all phenomena ("Scientific Orthodoxies," December 2005) mirrors very accurately my experience as a former evolutionary geologist who eventually rejected the Darwinian synthesis. I was a product of post-Vatican II Catholic elementary and high school education who received solid evolutionary teaching and accepted it wholeheartedly. During the course of my master's studies in geology, however, I had a personal re-conversion to faith and was forced to concede that God, being God, could have created the universe in any manner He desired, including that described literally in Genesis. I came to see that the true argument in the origins debate is not between evolutionist and creationist, but between those who don't believe in God and those who do.

Once I realized this, the question that remained for me was, where does the evidence point? As a geologist, I have come to believe that biology and earth science support special creation, young age, and a worldwide flood. I realize, however, that intelligent people will differ on interpretation of the evidence. What alarms me is the willingness of otherwise strongly orthodox Christians, particularly Catholics, to reject out of hand any suggestion that God perhaps did not confine Himself to an apparently random, apparently purposeless mechanism of creating life.

I share Behe's desire to teach Christian students that they don't have to conform to the prevailing materialistic worldview. I tell my children that belief in either creation or evolution is a matter of faith. Atheists such as Richard Lewontin or Richard Dawkins have faith that nothing exists apart from what can be experienced through the senses. Christians, whether evolutionist or creationist, have faith that there is an order of existence beyond the natural, and that God is the creator of all that exists. My children know that for me, special creation is the theory that explains the evidence better. However, I try to teach them that charity demands that we treat all participants in the debate with courtesy and humility, since we will not know for certain what the truth is until the day that we finally come face to face with Him who made us, and all else that exists.

Jackie Lee
Vero Beach, Florida

In "Scientific Orthodoxies," Michael Behe leveled a considerable critique against the use of Darwinian evolutionary theory as a Trojan horse for radical philosophical materialism. This is a welcome clarification of the adversarial role of Intelligent Design—not against evolutionary science, but against a rigidly materialistic philosophy. Ironically, given the accusations of his critics, Behe emerges as a crusader in the millennium-long project to explicitly demarcate the domain of science from that of religion and to critique the philosophies that attempt to bridge the two.

Beyond Behe's critique, the triumphalism of many Darwinists so early in the game of quantitative biology seems hopelessly naive. To anticipate the future discoveries of any science is a perilous exercise. Yet a hint at the future character of biology can be gleaned by comparison with a much more mature science, mathematical physics. Even given the

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greater complexity of the subject matter in biology—animate, highly systematic, and, finally, conscious—compared to the inanimate subject matter of physics, there are parallels:

• Up until a century ago biology was largely a descriptive exercise in taxonomy: genus, phylum, etc. Notwithstanding the immense progress over the last one hundred years, molecular biology is still in the early stages of quantitative description. In this regard mathematical physics predates quantitative biology by over 300 years. Systems biology is today largely qualitative and quantum biology is still in the future.

• Progress in physics closely followed progress in computation: conics, calculus, analytical functions, computers, and so on. Computational biology is primitive, and accurately determining the folded configuration of even a modest-sized protein is a great challenge.

• Four hundred years into the physics project, the picture that continues to unfold—Schrödinger's Cat, quantum multiverses, ten-dimensional strings, wormholes—is arguably stranger and more mysterious than ever. Why would anyone suppose that the unfolding story of animate, conscious life contains fewer surprises?

• Similarly, after four hundred years of physics, we finally have some confidence in the Big Bang as a theory of the origin of the physical universe. This confidence is still tentative, the key data being less than five decades old, but the detailed, quantitative support for Big Bang theory is in vast contrast with Darwinism as a theory of biological origins. To borrow from one source quoted by Behe, "there are presently no detailed Darwinian accounts of the evolution of any biochemical system, only a variety of wishful speculations." (Although the Big Bang is not generally covered in high school physics, there seems to be some pressing need for including Darwinism in the biology curriculum.)

Crystal-balling forward to the four hundredth anniversary of modern biology, it is anyone's guess whether Darwin will stride Newton-like across the landscape or be just a quaint footnote in the prehistory of real science.

Carmen A. Catanese
Rocky Hill, New Jersey

Michael Behe replies:

I appreciate Jackie Lee's and Carmen Catanese's letters, which together help to illustrate the breadth of freedom available to a Christian interpreting the physical evidence of nature. The danger to Christians from osmosing alien, materialistic presumptions, I think, far outweighs the danger of being wrong about any particular scientific point.

Bloggers of the World, Unite!

In his article "God on the Internet" (December 2005), Jonathan V. Last is worried that "even at its best, the Internet is a weakening of reality, and with its consumer satisfactions, politicizing impulses, and substitutions for the body, it constantly lures us up into thinner and thinner air." His final suggestion to the reader is, "Shut off your computer. Take a deep breath. Go to church."

I share his concern about the weakening of reality that takes place in cyberspace. At its worst, the Internet can shepherd its users toward isolation and abstraction. It gives a larger platform to ordinary individuals—along with their errors and their vices—than has ever before existed. And its great virtue, the power to communicate an almost limitless quantity of information, is also its great danger: An overload of information can render any particular point insignificant.

It seems to me, however, that a number of Last's complaints about religion on the Internet could easily be leveled at the mainstream print media. "In the virtual church of the web," he writes, "the hymnal one finds in the back pew may be quite different from the hymnal in the front pew." But haven't Catholics been saying the same thing for years—only about the press getting their sound bites from more progressive Catholics such as Father Richard McBrien?

Last writes that the Internet "lends itself easily to politicization." Well, yes—but isn't that the case in any media that makes room for editorials? Maybe what Last really objects to is "the allure of the Internet's political reductionism." But I've heard the same charge leveled at talk radio. Last also cites two Catholic organizations—Your Catholic Voice and Priests For Life—using the web for explicitly political ends. But I'm not sure what his objection is to their activity. Priests for Life would be a political group whether or not they used the Internet—would Last rather they employed only direct mail?

With regard to consumerism, Last is right: There's a lot of junk for sale on the Internet, and some of it is religiously-themed. But it's not as if you can't find ads for religious goods of less than manifest worth outside the web. It seems to me one of the great strengths of the Internet is that it gives non-celebrity authors a chance to do their own marketing. (Full disclosure: I am such an author, and I have a link to my book's page on *Amazon.com* on my website.) The Internet is an efficient way to make your work available to the maximum number of interested consumers. If my book happens to be about religious matters (which it is), why is that a problem?

"On the Internet," continues Last, "those dissatisfied with what they find in their religious brick-and-mortar communities can simply retreat into a virtual world in which they are surrounded entirely by like-minded

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people." Of course, a person could be accused of doing the same thing by subscribing to newspapers such as the *Wanderer* or the *National Catholic Reporter*. For that matter, read the comments boxes at some of the more popular Catholic blogs, such as Mark Shea's *Catholic and Enjoying It* or Amy Welborn's *Open Book*, and you'll see that their readerships are hardly of one mind. Last concludes that the Catholic blogging community of St. Blog's Parish is "a community based on like-mindedness and tied together by remote interaction—which makes for a very strange community, indeed." No stranger, I'd argue, than the community of First Things readers.

Last's article also sets up what seems to me a false opposition. He writes, "The failure of anonymous online pornography to be real sex is also the failure of anonymous online churching to be real religion: In both sex and religion, incarnation—the physical body—turns out to matter a great deal." Amen to the claim about the body. But do many people suppose that religious blogs, or websites selling religious material and distributing religious information, are somehow trying to be a substitute for religion the way porn tries to provide a substitute for sex? Last mentions cyber Seders and Internet muftis, virtual rosaries and an online Liturgy of the Hours, so it does seem like somebody somewhere is praying in front of a computer. But he also notes that the Catholic Church does not sanction e-confession, and that there are no sacraments on the Internet. Yes, there are dangers in the Internet, but it's not clear to me that people are choosing between the computer and going to church.

Matthew Lickona
La Mesa, California

I was pleased to see First Things devote so much space to the interesting topic of religion on the Internet. And *Beliefnet* was honored to be included in the sites discussed. But there were a number of fairly dramatic misrepresentations of the site and my views.

First, the piece states that "Waldman originally designed *Beliefnet* to be a giant ecumenical web magazine." We have quite consciously never used the word "ecumenical." The reason: the company's goal is not to get people to see the commonality of their faith or universal principles; it's to help them explore their own faith. It's fine if people come to *Beliefnet* seeking a new path, but we're more often home to people who believe they have already found God and the true path. We do not attempt to convince them that all religions are equally valid but instead help them to strengthen their understanding of their faith and their connection to others within that faith.

Last implies that *Beliefnet* is ground zero for rootless, morally relative spiritual shoppers, a New Age paradise for people intrigued with the spiritual flavor of the month. For instance, he cites *Beliefnet*'s advertising mix, implying that *Beliefnet* is a New Age haven. "Andrew Weill, the bald, bearded vitamin guru, is a *Beliefnet* partner, as is the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. DebtSX sends *Beliefnet* subscribers emails offering those struggling with debt a way to 'get help now.'"

This is an oddly selective listing of our advertisers, which also have included the Billy Graham Association, Liberty University, AveMaria Singles, *AmericanCatholic.org*, many evangelical Protestant publishers (Zondervan, Thomas Nelson, Tyndale), and several conservative political groups. Most of our advertisers are mainstream national advertisers like Disney, Lilly, Pfizer, and others without a particular religious agenda.

Similarly, Last's juxtaposition of different *Beliefnet* newsletters makes it sound as though woo-woo spirituality trumps real religion. He might have looked at it another way: Out of sixteen newsletter titles, Daily Bible—which sends subscribers a short scripture reading each day—is the second most popular, and its circulation is bigger than the Buddhist, Hindu, Islam, and Judaism newsletters combined. Email newsletters may not seem like real religion to Jonathan Last, but we're proud of the fact that each day we bring the Bible into people's mailboxes.

His discussion of *Beliefnet*'s content again implies that we focus on the free-form "spiritual not religious" crowd. It might surprise you to learn that *Beliefnet* has published articles or interviews by George Weigel, Charles Colson, Joseph Bottum, Frederica Mathewes-Green, Allen Hertzke, Stanley Hauerwas, Tom Bethell, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Phillip Jenkins, and David Klinghoffer—all of whom have also written for First Things. Our Catholicism editor is Charlotte Allen, another First Things writer. Come to think of it, we've excerpted articles from First Things, too!

Last makes a classic error: He finds content on *Beliefnet* that he believes is silly or unworthy and says that therefore *Beliefnet* gives all of these equal value. I was recently at a Barnes & Noble that sold First Things in its magazine area. A few feet away it sold *Cat Fancy*. Over in the spirituality area it sold *Tricycle for Buddhists*. And yet First Things doesn't criticize Barnes & Noble for their morally relativist ecumenism—because you're happy that they give traditional religion espoused by First Things a place at the table. That's what *Beliefnet* does. We provide a platform for a wide variety of spiritual views or religions—including the views of the Catholic magisterium.

Last accurately quotes me as saying we're witnessing the growth of a "spiritual marketplace." What he misunderstands is that this is *not* necessarily bad news for the Catholic Church or orthodox religions—

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unless you happen to believe that traditional faiths are incapable of touching the hearts and souls of people who are searching for God unless coerced. If, however, you believe that the Church is just as effective as ever at helping connect people to Christ, then any means—including the Internet—that enables rapid and widespread dissemination of Christian ideas and Church teaching ought to be a good thing, if used wisely. That's why in 2002, John Paul II said in his letter "The Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel" that "the Church approaches this new medium with realism and confidence." I call special attention to his word "confidence."

John Adams once said he was "of the opinion that men ought (after they have examined with unbiased judgments every system of religion, and chosen one system, on their own authority, for themselves), to avow their opinions and defend them with boldness." *Beliefnet* provides a place where people can both examine faith and avow their opinions.

Steven Waldman
Editor-in-Chief
Beliefnet
New York, New York

I was dismayed to find an inaccuracy in Jonathan V. Last's article that related to me, my ministry, and my website. It was more than an inaccuracy since it was also inflammatory and impugned my character and motives. As though he could read my mind, Last made the dogmatic statement that "the primary mission of Defenders of the Catholic Faith is to move product" and that a "personal strain of consumerism leads people like Stephen Ray to hawk their wares." The comments about me and my site were within the general context of "the tyranny of the banal" and "siphoning money from the faithful" and "trying to cash in on religion."

Opinion is one thing, and gross misrepresentation is quite another. Criticizing intellectual and religious ideas are one thing, and personal attacks maligning comrades is quite another. First Things is known for its insightful critique, but making slanderous statements about people and their motives is quite another thing and should be remedied. It was beneath the usual standards, fair play, and judgment of First Things.

For the record, I am an enthusiastic convert to the Catholic faith and my website was started long before I ever wrote a book or produced a DVD. It was and is set up to help other converts along the journey and to help Catholics understand and defend their faith. I have always paid for it out of my pocket. After my materials became available through Ignatius Press I was asked by many to make them available on my site, which I did. I have a very successful secular business which more than supplies for all my needs. The little money made by selling my materials on my website covers less than half the cost of running my website and message board. And I give away as much as I ever sell.

I wish Last had called me, or written, or asked any of the thousands who visit my site. We would have given him the facts so he could have better served his readers. To imply that my "primary mission" is to "push product" and to "hawk wares" is not only unfair and uncharitable, it is also slanderous, dishonest and a disservice to your readers.

Steve Ray
Ypsilanti, Michigan

I take strong exception to the comments made about the Pastoral Solutions Institute's website in your article "God on the Internet." The writer suggests that our institute offers resources that appeal to both traditional and "alternative" relationships. In fact, the Pastoral Solutions Institute is an organization devoted to the faithful integration of Catholic teaching and counseling psychology. We are listed in the Official Catholic Directory as an asterisked listing under the Diocese of Steubenville, and we heartily proclaim complete magisterial fidelity in our work. We produce a daily radio broadcast heard on Catholic radio stations nationwide and in addition to the six books I have written for respectable Catholic publishers such as Our Sunday Visitor Press, Loyola, and *St. Anthony Messenger*, I have personally hosted two series on Catholicism and psychology on EWTN. The offhand implication that we somehow exist to promote or aid "alternative relationships" is either sloppy or outright libelous. Such comments have the potential to do serious damage to our credibility among the faithful Catholics we serve.

Gregory Popcak
Executive Director
Pastoral Solutions Institute
Steubenville, Ohio

In "God on the Internet" Jonathan V. Last speaks of how Steve Waldman, the founder of online religious supersite *Beliefnet*, compares the new exploration of potentially embarrassing religious matters in the privacy of one's home on the Internet to the "same phenomenon that has led to pornography spreading." To which Last asks: "Doesn't that metaphor give you pause? Is a technique that has made pornography into the Internet's number-one business really a good idea for religion, the Internet's number-two business? The failure of anonymous online pornography to be real sex is also the failure of anonymous online churching to be real religion: In both sex and religion, incarnation—the physical body—turns out to matter a great deal."

Last's words make perfect sense. How can anyone expect to receive true spiritual satisfaction through use of the Internet? I have been a member of the first computer-networked generation. I know firsthand the

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importance of the Internet. Today's students almost always perform research for papers using the Internet and online databases of articles and texts. I have done so for almost every paper I've written since eighth grade, and I will continue to use the Internet as a primary source of information throughout the rest of my life. So what happens to knowledge and writings that are not accessible to future generations as easily as those which are on the Internet?

This is the reason the Catholic Church must come to realize the importance of the Internet in the future. Many kids are spending hours on end watching television and being online: disconnected from family, friends, and society in general, and connected to new, evolving social networks on the World Wide Web. These children are indoctrinated by what they view—and they typically don't spend their time viewing religious or philosophical material.

The Church must find ways to make a person who is searching for religion and truth seek out the real-world Jesus. You cannot experience Jesus, fully and truly, on the Internet. The Church has such a deep well of spiritual resources in it's many thousands of ministries, and She must never forget the most invaluable resources of all: the Sacraments. This is why we must encourage the lost souls we encounter on the Internet to seek guidance in their spiritual lives from their local parishes, priests and faith communities. And we ourselves must do the same. As Last states at the end of his article, "Isn't religion supposed to enrich the world around us . . . ? Shut off your computer. Take a deep breath. Go to church."

Jeff Geerling
St. Louis, Missouri

Jonathan V. Last replies:

I received an extraordinary response to "God on the Internet," and I would like to thank all who took the time to correspond. Some of it, unfortunately, was generated by Steve Ray's call for the whole Internet to accuse me of making "slanderous statements" about his website. Since slander pertains to the spoken word, I think he meant "libelous," but readers will have to judge for themselves whether Ray's description of his site, or mine, is closer to the mark. On his homepage, he appears dressed in a full Indiana Jones outfit. The first three section categories listed under this logo are "Resources," "Products," and "Online Store." Beneath are links to sales pages for a number of his books. And beneath that is a large advertisement—the first thing the eye sees, really, once it gets past Indiana Ray—for Ray's *Footprints of God*. The ad reads: "*Take a Journey of Discovery!* Introducing the most original and dynamic video series in Catholic Church history! *The Footprints Of God: The Story of Salvation From Abraham To Augustine* will take you on a journey of discovery through the sweeping saga of salvation." Click on the link, and you can buy the series for $249.95.

I wish Gregory Popcak, for his part, had read my piece more closely. I do not anywhere claim his ministry caters to alternative living arrangements. I merely suggest that his website offers so many products for sale—I count six books, three sets of audio cassettes, and an invitation to an "initial, free, informational interview"—that they could certainly heal any troubled relationship, traditional or alternative.

The editor of *Beliefnet*, Steven Waldman, has several complaints, but his running theme is that *Beliefnet* specifically, and the Internet generally, is a thoroughly pluralistic enterprise. "Pluralistic" is probably a better word to describe *Beliefnet* than "ecumenical," the word I used, but I should point out to Waldman that not everyone on his staff got the memo: When *Beliefnet* first approached me to write for them, the editor I dealt with pitched it to me as "an ecumenical webzine." Waldman takes pride in the fact that his site offers customers maximal consumer choice, and that this is to be greeted with, as John Paul II put it, "confidence." But another word John Paul used is "realism." It seems to me that the Internet shows no end of triumphalism—confidence on stilts—but a dearth of realism. That call to realism compels one to note that the marketplace of ideas, like the marketplace of commodities, can have a cheapening effect on what it offers. There are real trade-offs here, and for those of us who believe in the treasures of the faith, this is of real concern.

Matthew Lickona and Jeff Geerling both offer the telling critique that the Internet is neither good nor bad, just new. It is a medium through which human virtue and human vice will flow, just as they do through the pages of opinion journals of opinion or, for that matter, brick-and-mortar churches. And they are obviously right: Technology does not possess the capacity for moral action.

And yet, it still matters how technology affects flesh-and-blood humans, who *do* have that capacity. On this count, the reaction to my essay increased, rather than allayed, my fears about the Internet. In scores of responses, not one person offered a constructive case for the Internet as a good. Lots of people wrote defensively and angrily about their corner of it. One correspondent, heeding Mr. Ray's call to action against me on his blog, wrote my editors at the *Weekly Standard* suggesting that I be fired because of my "heavy anti-Catholicism." Many others voiced similarly reductivist sentiments.

No one so far has put forth an argument for the Internet as a genuine good, the rough outlines of which might be: *Yes, it certainly looks like consumerism, but the beauty of the web is that it serves a higher purpose and this "product" we're push-*

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ing is doing good. Last is missing the boat on a wonderful tool for the furthering God's will because he's blinded by fear—though John Paul II, a promoter of this new technology, constantly reminded us: "Be not afraid." Experience suggests this optimistic view is wrong, but, as ever, the last word must belong to hope.

The Towers of Babylon

Omitted among the authorities on the relationship between the Church and America cited by Father Richard John Neuhaus in his fine essay "Our American Babylon" (December 2005) is Isaac Thomas Hecker. The mission of Father Hecker, founder of the Paulists, America's first Catholic religious society of men, can perhaps best be summarized by the words inscribed on his tombstone: "In the union of Catholic faith and American civilization . . . a future for the Church brighter than any past." He believed that a "new awakening" of intense responding to the Holy Spirit would bring about such a union.

As a young New Yorker dubbed by colleagues "Earnest the Seeker," Isaac Hecker associated intimately with the mid-nineteenth century Transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, the Alcott family, and many others.

In fact, he lived in two utopian Transcendentalist communities, Brook Farm and Fruitlands. Interestingly enough, Saint Thomas More three centuries before had placed his *Utopia* in the lands newly explored by Amerigo Vespucci. The America named after this explorer was, in the nineteenth century, permeated with a belief in the providential position of her people in realizing the utopian dream of a better life, of liberty and justice, for all.

The Transcendentalists pursued that dream through personal and communal spirituality without religion, a kind of "gnosticism" in Harold Bloom's term. Hecker, on the other hand, through attentiveness to the Holy Spirit, broad reading and reflection on the world's great religions, and the influence of his mentor Orestes Brownson, discovered that one needed a religion in order to arrive at a spirituality of any depth. He decided to join Brownson in embracing the religion of the author of *Utopia*—Catholicism.

Father Neuhaus applies the term "contrast society" in describing the role the Church must play in providing "a transcendent horizon for our civil arguments." Isaac Hecker used the image of the "North Star." The Church must provide society with a guiding spirituality.

But he goes deeper. Catholicism in particular, he believed, could not only help guide America, but also celebrate her rich diversity while serving to bring about an overriding unity. It could provide both a guiding spirituality and a unifying, transforming spirituality, salt and light, so beautifully embodied in our own time by Pope John Paul II.

While participating in the recovery of bodies at New York's Ground Zero in the aftermath of the tragedy of September 11, I was struck by two icons at different ends of the pit. One was a steel beam popularly named the "Cross at Ground Zero." The other was one of the earliest paintings of the Great Seal of the United States, located in St. Paul's Chapel just above George Washington's pew. Written on the ribbon of that seal, which, as Father Neuhaus mentions, is also on the back of every U.S. dollar bill, is the motto *e pluribus unum* ("out of many, one"). In my mind the symbolism was clear—that in our quest for *e pluribus unum* we encounter the cross.

Isaac Hecker, founding the Paulists in 1858 on the eve of the living cross of the American Civil War, prophesied a Catholic opportunity to be a channel of the Holy Spirit in the service of uniting our people. Perhaps with our nation so polarized, now is the "Catholic moment" and ecumenical/interreligious moment to help America embrace a true spirituality of *e pluribus unum*.

Bruce Nieli, C.S.P.
Memphis, Tennessee

In "Our American Babylon," Fr. Neuhaus writes that the American *novus ordo seclorum* was "not wired for first-principle questions such as the humanity and rights of slaves of African descent."

Reading the Constitution, you will find that the approval of the conventions of nine of the thirteen colonies was required to put the Constitution into effect. Looking at the list of the colonies, you will see that in five of them, the interest of slavery was a predominating force. Thirteen minus five only equals eight—not enough to bring the Constitution into effect.

These numbers were not arrived at accidentally. The five states in question insisted on them, to prevent anyone trying to sneak the contents of what eventually became the thirteenth amendment (the one abolishing slavery) into the text of the Constitution itself, or into any of the ten original amendments.

Further along in his essay, Fr. Neuhaus mentions that John Courtney Murray admired the authors of the Constitution most of all for "the modesty of their intention." It is not only modesty, but also plain common sense, that a document which could not be ratified—could not be put into effect, and bind the parties thereto—would have been a great waste of effort, paper, and ink.

The "articles of peace" which Fr. Murray admired were really just the articles of elementary common sense. The slaveholding interest, dominating five of the thirteen colonies, would not have consented to having almost all its property confiscated to satisfy the consciences of the radical

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abolitionists (some of whom represented the other colonies at the Constitutional convention).

It took a very bloody and costly civil war to accomplish that.

Edmund Weinmann
Huntington, New York

Teaching the Faith

Father Neuhaus makes light of the controversy in the Golden State over the University of California's refusal to accept certain evangelical high schools' courses as meeting requirements for admission (While We're At It, January).

Two points to consider: The university is not telling the faith-based school what it must not teach, but, rather, what sort of courses are necessary for admission to this particular university; and Neuhaus might well side with the university if he saw the anti-Catholicism that pervades many of the texts and courses in many conservative evangelical schools. This anti-Catholicism is well documented in Frances Paterson's book *Democracy and Intolerance* and Albert Menendez' book *Visions of Reality: What Fundamentalist Schools Teach.*

Menendez cites, for example, textbooks used in fundamentalist schools that call Catholicism "a perversion of biblical Christianity"; that say the papacy rests "upon a number of false assumptions"; that refer to "Romanist error," "pagan Catholicism"; that declare "The Southern states . . . saw themselves threatened by those holding . . . unbiblical beliefs, who were most numerous in the Northeast;" that hold the Mass is "unbiblical and idolatrous" and monasticism "has no justification in Scripture but derives from pagan influences on apostate Christianity"; that insist the Reformation was "a divine instrument for propagating religious truth in Catholic Europe," and Jesuits are "a hellish conclave"; etc. Should such teaching prepare students for admission to a public university?

Edd Doerr
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Americans for Religious Liberty
Silver Spring, Maryland

RJN replies:

If that is all they're taught, the answer is no. If admission to a public university, or any university, required freedom from prejudices and misinformation picked up in schools public or private, there would be very few students in university. Moreover, the disqualifications cited by Golden State had to do not with anti-Catholicism but with religious education in general. I would hope the president of Americans for Religious Freedom would care about protecting also religious expression which he, and I, think quite wrongheaded.

Volf Redux

In responding to recent criticism from Miroslav Volf, Richard John Neuhaus did not properly express the nature of my quotation of Volf's work: "Any church excluding Christians at a given place is not merely a bad church, but rather is not a church at all, since a Eucharist to which not all the Christians at a given place might gather would not be merely a morally deficient Eucharist, but rather no Eucharist at all." In his earlier review of *The Evangelical Moment* (August/September 2005), where this quotation occurs, Neuhaus made no mention at all that I clearly indicated that Volf was working through material whose source was the Orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas. I wrote: "Even more emphatically, Volf reflects on the work of the Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas." At the time of writing these words, however, I had thought that Volf did indeed agree with Zizioulas (and I was clearly not alone in this), but have since come to learn otherwise. That is a matter of scholarly judgment that has now been corrected by Volf's reply, and I appreciate that. But if Volf was implying that my use of the quotation entailed "Opening communion indiscriminately to all who confess Christ irrespective of how they live and what they believe," then it must be noted that this observation has nothing to do with the views expressed in *The Evangelical Moment.* In that work, I was considering the possibility of intercommunion of Roman Catholics with doctrinally orthodox, spiritually holy, morally resolute evangelical Christians.

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Opinion

In Moral Labor

Agnes R. Howard

Near the end of *Reproduction and Responsibility,* the 2004 report of the President's Council on Bioethics, comes a call to safeguard women and pregnancy. "In an effort to express our society's profound regard for human pregnancy and pregnant women," the council urges Congress to prohibit procedures exploiting female reproductive capacities.

The concern for pregnancy is well founded, if seldom expressed. What is striking about ongoing public discussions of stem cells, cloning, assisted-reproductive technologies, and the like, is how infrequently pregnancy and maternity are mentioned. In the media, pregnancy is more likely to be downplayed or caricatured than regarded seriously.

Not that we don't take *babymaking* seriously. Reports of high-tech reproduction appear frequently in the news, the regular cast of characters including frozen embryos, postmenopausal women, surrogates, lawyers, and doctors. What these stories confirm for extraordinary cases is now familiar in more ordinary ones: Having babies is a project that we undertake with doctors. The implication is that the doctor or the treatment are responsible for fetal flourishing, and gestation is a stage to be passed through on the way to getting the baby out. Meanwhile, bedazzled by DNA, pop culture gives the leading role to genes, the new package of forty-six that hurtles the zygote into full-fledged humanity. Along the way, gravid women become comparatively insignificant, bystanders in babymaking.

What we need is an evaluation that makes sense of both biology and experience. Poor thinking about childbearing obscures important aspects of what it means to be human. Technology has changed childbearing, not only for women employing cutting-edge medical techniques but also for "routine" pregnancies. But modern science is finally limited in its ability to tell us the meaning of our life in it. Leon Kass, former chair of the bioethics council, has called for a biology "that does full justice to the meaning of our peculiarly human union of soul and body in which low neediness and divine-seeking aspiration are concretely joined." Philosophical sources, premodern and current, can contribute to this, as can religious voices. The Christian tradition offers insights and a vocabulary that may help us grasp what we are doing in bearing children and how deeply it matters.

There are conflicting Christian opinions on childbearing. But a good place to begin is with the idea of *procreation.* It is an archaic-sounding word, and though sometimes made to stand in as a synonym for "reproduction," there are crucial differences between the two. Reproduction depends on industrial and mechanical metaphors, making copies of the human species. In contrast, procreation roots sexuality and childbearing deeply within two relations: that of the man and woman, and that between the couple and God. In the first, the sexual embrace of husband and wife opens them to receive a child. In the second, procreation places human intimacy in the context of a divine work, with husband and wife as co-workers alongside God in the creation of a unique human soul.

While procreation implicitly defines the whole process from conception to birth, most often the word is used particularly for the parents' physical union. Given the profundity and physical character of pregnancy, though, a woman's continuing efforts to nurture a fetus should also be described as a moral act, her cooperation with God in bringing forth life. Indeed, the woman is particularly burdened and particularly honored in the process. She is the first to witness the creation of the new human being, never before introduced to the created order but present in her. "God creates the soul of the new child *in her body,*" Alice von Hildebrand writes of this maternal privilege. "This implies a direct 'contact' between Him and the mother-to-be, a contact in which the father plays no role whatever."

In centuries past babies were thought to arise from male "seed" and then be shaped by bodily humors and planetary arrangements, with mothers largely passive in the process. Some premodern ideas may strike us as peculiar, but at least they approached procreation in a philosophical way, mindful that biology necessarily carried implications about men, women, heredity, and divine purpose. Scientific language today tells us much more precisely what happens when DNA from sperm and egg unite—but without obvious connections to relationships human or divine. We have known for some time that women provide half the genetic material of a new baby, and that they also give it the environment, nutriment, and nurturance necessary for life. After thousands of years of assuming generation and the child's soul to be primarily a male accomplishment, the discovery that mothers contribute both seed and matter might have inspired fresh consideration of maternity. Instead, we have passed from the ancient

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description of babies as essentially man-made to considering them as basically self-made. Theologians discern where God may still be found in the process—maybe ensoulment comes at the joining of chromosomes, maybe with the primitive streak—but what mothers do seems to matter only when things go wrong.

The transformation of our embryology has immense implications for human experience, but a reductive scientism should not have the first and last words in describing human life. A sperm-meets-egg-makes-cluster-of-cells narrative is inadequate to explain our origins: not false, only not sufficient. As Pope John Paul II emphasized in his 1994 Letter to Families, "Man's coming into being does not conform to the laws of biology alone, but also, and directly, to God's creative will, which is concerned with the genealogy of the sons and daughters of human families." Our aim should not be to reclaim folk beliefs about how babies are made, but given the biological and clinical frameworks of maternity today, return to philosophy and theology to help describe the import of what we are doing.

The knowledge (and self-knowledge) imparted by medicine alters the way women view and live pregnancy. Even before that knowledge informs action, it is morally significant. Human gestation resembles the same process in other mammals except for this distinction: We are very much aware of it and we, in some measure, understand what is happening. Carrying a baby is a conscious act.

A mother learns that her actions provide critical assistance to the baby's development. For all that we talk about babies as products of their genes, prenatal care presupposes that what happens to a fetus *in utero* has significant effect. Pregnant women are cautioned not to smoke, drink alcohol, eat mercury-tainted fish or pesticide-laden produce, empty cat litter, or perm their hair. On the positive side, they are admonished to exercise, eat healthily, monitor physical symptoms, report for regular doctor visits. Care in observing these directives should not be viewed merely as following doctors' orders, a form of social control, as some feminists contend. Instead, prenatal prescriptions are better seen as practical steps whereby a woman can put together what she recognizes scientifically with the desire to nurture and assist the child she carries.

What medicine reveals about the mechanics of gestation, rather than stressing woman's passivity, instead allows us to see pregnancy as a moral act. "Feeling fine, just tired," a mother-to-be might politely answer when asked how she is doing. Just tired: bone-tired, spent as though having performed a strenuous task. A mother *is* doing something strenuous, not "making" a baby directly, like hammering out a shape in a forge, but growing tissue, crafting a placenta, carrying weight.

Pregnancy is not just waiting but real work. Exactly what kind of work is it? Terms offered by the market are not much help: It is not evaluated like salaried tasks, and phrases like "maternity leave" construe the event as though it were vacation or hiatus from meaningful employment. We might better avail ourselves of theological categories to help make sense of women's labor in this phase of procreation: *Hospitality* describes the mother as welcoming a needy guest, *self-denial* honors the pains and costs of that nurture, and *stewardship* observes the boundaries of her agency in respecting Providence.

Scripture and the early Church enjoined hospitality as a duty, and St. Benedict commended it in his Rule. Believers were to extend kindness, such as the acts of charity itemized in Matthew 25, to strangers as though to the Lord himself: "I was a stranger and you invited me in." An expectant mother welcomes and serves a child as a stranger. Ultrasound pictures notwithstanding, the fetus is a person she does not yet know but whom she is uniquely qualified to help. Doctors may not encourage "eating for two" any more, but an expectant woman comes to live as two. Her whole being is stretched to accommodate another person. Her body, clothing, time, rest, and food are shared, and the most intimate areas of life reflect the presence of another person. Consider those notorious food cravings. Women develop aversions to edibles formerly counted as favorites, or desires for things normally detested, or for great quantities or in strange combinations—as in the venerable jokes about pickles and ice cream. These cravings point to something fundamental about pregnancy. Wanting something you usually do not like attests to this: You are not yourself. At least, you are not *only* yourself. You are acting on behalf of someone else, wittingly and unwittingly.

Consumption theorists have argued that women come to know the baby-to-be by buying things for it. When anthropologists Daniel Miller and Alison J. Clarke studied London women in their preparations for birth, Clarke concluded that "the putting together of nurseries, the receiving and deciphering of infant-related gifts, and the competencies and social relations implemented in the everyday consumption of baby-related goods simultaneously makes babies and mothers." A casual glance at parenting magazines and layette departments might ratify that conclusion. There are myriad items one is said to "need" for a baby. By purchasing things for a yet-unborn child, the argument goes, a woman constructs herself as a mother and the fetus as a social being.

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These theories are on to something but miss the mark. A mother may be swept in by the marketing of maternity and place great (if misplaced) value on nursery decor and the newborn wardrobe. However misdirected that attention is when focused solely on buying, it is not coextensive with a desire for acquisition. Rather, assembling crib, diapers, clothes, car seat, is an act of charity to someone who, having nothing, will need these things. Buying for baby reflects an effort to do good for another.

Pregnancy is a primary community, an exhibit to onlookers as well as to mothers of interdependence, charity, and life together. It qualifies our assumptions of autonomy, the liberal romance with individuality and self-sufficiency. None of us at the beginning is autonomous, and the continuation of the species *depends* on the partial sacrifice of autonomy that women make in childbearing. Learning to extend oneself on behalf of the child *in utero* (and observing women who provide this aid and comfort) nurtures community within and beyond the family.

The self-denial of these nine months invites comparisons to Lent. Uniting discipline and charity, a mother who swears off liquor, tobacco, and sweets aims not at personal health, as in a diet, but at the child's well-being. Pregnancy is a time, to borrow John Winthrop's definition of Christian charity, to abridge ourselves of superfluities to provide for another's necessities. A mother practices this self-abasement in what she bears as well as in what she forsakes. For every woman willing to praise and cherish pregnancy, there are half a dozen who profess to hate it. There is reason for this. Pregnancy can feel lousy. It is true that pregnancy is not a disease, as women's-health advocates for decades have urged obstetricians to acknowledge, but it can feel like one. For most women in prosperous, medically advanced societies, maternity complaints are relatively minor. But childbearing also can trigger long-term debilities or disfigurements. And there is always the possibility that pregnancy could kill you.

Carrying a child means (sometimes quite literally) giving your life for the child. More generally it means suffering, often on a small scale and occasionally a large one, as the body does the work of growing a child. This is true not just of labor, whose pain and peril has not been eliminated altogether by modern medicine, but of the whole nine months. Choosing to embrace the gravity, even danger, of the undertaking makes maternity much more than a stint as a patient or a baby-store consumer.

Finally, pregnancy is an exercise in stewardship. If hospitality and self-denial illuminate how much a woman does in pregnancy, stewardship acknowledges the limits of her doing. Though the term can be applied variously, Biblical stewardship means taking care of something that is not one's own, caring for what is entrusted by Providence. Seeing children as gifts discourages our efforts at over-determination. Maternity is not manufacture. A woman carrying a child is not making a baby in the sense that she can control the outcome. She is working together with God in the creation of a new human life, of which she, at end, is not the author. Part of the danger of the screening methods that have become increasingly common in reproductive medicine is their encouragement of a "quality-control" sensibility. A mother's task is to care for, nurture, and protect the life she carries to the extent that she can.

The limits of our stewardship responsibility also can be a source of solace. Maternity guidebooks and advertising are rife with prompts to anxiety and guilt, warning that the slightest maternal misstep or oversight could destroy or handicap a wanted child. Pregnancy should not be burdened in this way. As Martin Luther wrote about women who suffered miscarriage, "One ought not to frighten or sadden such mothers by harsh words, because it was not due to their carelessness or neglect that the birth of the child went off badly." However scrupulous a mother may be, a child may be miscarried, have grave problems, or be stillborn. Knowing that ultimately we do not make a child alive can draw us away from the guilt and despair of such situations.

Stewardship returns us to the need to view pregnancy not as the project of a woman and her doctor, but as a couple's collaboration with God. In that collaboration the woman visibly holds together unitive and procreative love, physically linking eros to the child it engendered; pregnancy's symptoms are both delayed consequences of intimacy and advance signals of another person's coming to be.

A mother's tasks, reflections, and abstentions, from conception through birth, comprise her part of that procreative work. When we think this way about pregnancy, we begin to appreciate it more fully. We admire the way God has arranged the connection of mother and child, the moral good that women in this state are situated to undertake.

At a time when biotechnology explores ways to enhance, produce, and destroy embryos, it may seem unnecessary to focus on ordinary pregnancy. But it is in this ordinary process, in practicing habits of nurture and hope on behalf of another, that virtue is developed. It is through doing well with the day-to-day care of new life that we grow more prepared to meet extraordinary situations when they come. Reproductive technologies already abound at conception and delivery but as yet leave the span in between largely free. Preg-

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nancy is an area in which we may still admit technology into our lives rather than the other way around. We should admit it in a way that honors the special work we undertake with the Creator.

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The Civic University

Stephen M. Fields, S.J.

Forty-five years ago John Courtney Murray, S.J., published his groundbreaking work *We Hold These Truths*, which he subtitled "Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition." He understands the defining proposition of our way of life to be enshrined in our motto, *e pluribus unum*—which, for Murray, means that, however much dissension, disagreement, and divergence characterize public argument in America, they do not threaten the underlying agreement, consensus, and communion that maintains our civic order.

So much of this, of course, could be said as a mere commonplace. But Murray's incisive eye looks deeper. It sees that the American proposition is founded on a realist epistemology, crystallized in the notion that truths are self-evident. In order words, truths are objective, universal, and accessible to human reason. Deny this epistemology, Murray claims, and you deny the American proposition. Deny the proposition, and you eviscerate civic order. Eviscerate civil order, and you ruin the possibility for peace, justice, and freedom.

Murray's continuing relevance lies in his prophecy that the American proposition is tenuous, especially as voices from many quarters are all too loud in their denial of its major premise, the realist epistemology. Not the least of these voices are shouted cacophonously from the contemporary academy, for whom truth is too often a matter of opinion.

For those of us who may be skeptical of a full-blown realist epistemology, it is evident that we must at least go this far with Murray. As a matter of historical and practical fact, the realist epistemology forms the basis of the American civil union. If it is to be replaced, then the entire proposition, together with the institutions that are derived from it, needs major overhauling. Put this way, all of us, no matter what epistemology we personally subscribe to, have a vested interest in sustaining the realist epistemology. If we wish to avoid anarchy, then we need to accept the simple fact that it constitutes the ground on which the forms of public order are built.

The chief form of American public order, contends Murray, is not the House and the Senate, the Executive and the Judiciary. It isn't Jefferson's eloquent Declaration, or Madison's high-minded *Papers*, or the Constitution. It is rather the presupposition of all of these—a shared belief in the efficacy of public argument.

Deriving his analysis from Socrates, Cicero, and Augustine, Murray meant by public argument the continuing debate about the nature of the consensus that grants America's forms of civic order their legitimacy. The efficacy of this debate cannot be reduced to free speech, or the license of personal expression, or even the equitable process of "letting all sides be heard." Efficacy happens when public conversation is disciplined by, and sustained according to, the laws of reason. Moreover, efficacy means that public conversation will produce resolutions. Such resolutions may not embrace universally shared conclusions. But they should at least be able to express those differences that can be tolerated, and why; and those that cannot, and why not. In short, the efficacy of public argument means that truth is realizable and capable of transparency.

Ever precarious, the American proposition is in perennial danger from the corrosive cancer that Murray calls "barbarism." Barbarism, Murray reminds us, results from the ambiguous nature of the human person, prone to the avarice, prejudice, passion, and solipsism that blind and befuddle reason. Thus handicapped, errant human reason concomitantly skews and sunders the delicate balance between individual freedom and civic order, as the American proposition incarnates it.

Murray's thinking about the American proposition offers both encouragement and prophecy to Catholic higher education. The state of the university in America, or for that matter in the industrialized West, reveals a potpourri of views about the nature of human reason—some of which are turning the university into an incubator for the barbarism that Murray deplored. J.M. Roberts, for example, observes that the contemporary university has entered into complicity with the rampant materialism and relativism of modern society. The value of the university, this former warden of Merton College, Oxford, says, is increasingly becoming its ability to manipulate nature, to create wealth, and to augment power. If true, I suggest, this would make human reason the hostage of avarice.

Then there is the opinion of Donald Kennedy, formerly president of Stanford. He argues that the current leadership of American higher education has failed "to

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create sharply individualized, recognizable identities" for America's colleges and universities. This failure fuels the increasing trend in the academy to homogenize the methods of inquiry and the subjects of research, rather than healthfully diversify them. The result of this is that human reason becomes the hostage of prejudice.

There is also the postmodernist view. At its best, as John Ellis of the University of California at Santa Cruz observes, postmodernism seeks to redress moral flaws in the West's dominant forms of thought. At its worst, however, postmodernism seeks to deconstruct these forms of thought without replacing them. Jean-François Lyotard, a prominent postmodern thinker, summarizes the movement's efforts in what he calls the "fission of meaning"—meaning (ironically) that reason entirely lacks any center, any generalizable laws governing it. When reason is thus hollowed out and left an empty shell, the human person is rendered the hostage of passion; and the rational deregulation of passion hands the civil order over to the demagogues.

Finally, there is the secular view posited by the Enlightenment. Antithetical to postmodernism, it is, in fact, the foundation of the modern university. This view still reigns, however implicitly, at least in its distrust of religion and theology in the university. As Kant argues in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, only philosophy is an autonomous discipline, because only it is governed solely by free rational inquiry. Therefore, since disciplines like theology tend to accept received traditions blindly and uncritically, it is the university's role to purge them by autonomous reason of their proclivity to superstition.

The problem with this view is that it turns reason into a fetish or a talisman. As the contemporary thinker Maurice Blondel observes, the laws of reason demand and require an object not bound to time and space in order to explain themselves and satisfy their need for an ultimate resolution. When reason is mistakenly thought to be self-sufficient, it becomes an idol believed capable of achieving universal perfectibility. But this belief, like a sorcerer's conjuring, is chimeral. Far from purifying religion of superstition, the secular view itself devolves into superstition. When this superstition of reason is enshrined in the university, I submit that it makes the human person the hostage of an arrogant solipsism; and this renders the civil order, as a result, more prone to the strident self-confidence of chauvinism and imperialism.

Avarice, prejudice, passion, and solipsism: These are Murray's definition of barbarism. Their ramifications show the fatal flaw in, for instance, Bill Readings' 1996 book *The University in Ruins*. Readings argues that it is both misguided and anachronistic to continue sustaining the university as the seedbed of our cultural self-knowledge as a nation. Grant him this, then grant us the increased likelihood of plutocracy, fascism, demagoguery, and imperialism.

Murray's prophecy about the tenuousness of the American proposition reminds us that American civil order is founded on an implicit model of human reason that is the guarantor of our freedom. This model is realist, because a realist understanding of truth sustains the efficacy of our public argument about ourselves. We undermine this model to our social peril. At a time when other models of reason in the American academy are potentially running this risk, the Catholic university presupposes a model congenial with the American proposition. Faith is primarily a rational act, not reducible merely to love, trust, and sentimentality. This rational act advances humanity's understanding of the ultimate nature of reality, even as free rational inquiry into the nature of reality cannot help but more deeply articulate the truth offered by faith. Religion and theology thus diversify the university's methods of research and subjects of inquiry by supplying perspectives that inhibit the reduction of reason to its own supposed autonomy.

If barbarism is to be combated and our freedom sustained, the epistemology that undergirds the American proposition needs to be furthered on its own merits and also brought into constructive dialogue with other views. America's religious schools in general—and its Catholic colleges in particular—are distinctively qualified to do this, not only for the sake of religion, but as a dutiful act of patriotic and civic piety.

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America the Comfortable

David A. Westbrook

Alexis de Tocqueville was born in 1805, traveled across the United States and some of Canada for nine months in 1831, and returned to France to publish *Democracy in America*, widely regarded as the best single book about that historical, political, economic, and cultural phenomenon known as "America."

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In 2005, in honor of the bicentennial of his birth, the editors of the *Atlantic Monthly* commissioned another smart Frenchman to travel about the country, talk to people, and tell us what it all means. And so the "celebrity philosopher" Bernard-Henri Lévy was sent out to reassess America. Hiring a new Tocqueville sounded like a good idea, because America recently has seemed more difficult to understand, for citizens and foreigners alike. Moreover, Lévy was a good candidate. Americans, at least literate academic types, love French intellectuals—though such love is often unrequited.

Tocqueville's project was not simply to produce a cultural map of America. Instead, he explored America as a way to learn what it meant to found a society on democratic principles. Tocqueville believed democratization was part of the march of history. While he recognized the process at work in both France and England, he considered democratization to be most advanced in the United States, most simply because the newer nation began with less of its society organized along non-democratic lines. A study of the United States could thus reveal something about the character of the future, not just of America, but of the world. This was not an unmitigated good. Democratization resulted in the loss of much that was valuable in the ancient regime, and democracy has perils of its very own. Thus the powerful if vague idea of democracy serves to unify Tocqueville's account, which in the process becomes an inquiry into the character of democracy *per se*, ethnography en route to political philosophy.

Lévy's account of America has no unifying concept comparable to democracy. Instead of treating America in terms of an idea, we get lots of journalism, mostly descriptions of places or paraphrases of interviews. As they accumulate, Lévy's stories present a composite account of America, a textual mosaic of the United States. Inevitably, certain themes assert themselves. Lévy reports over and over again on things he evidently finds important to understanding America, including religion (both as actual practice and as metaphor for other things), minorities, the politics of left and right, the city (more as idea than place), and prisons.

So, for example, at the very beginning of his journey, Lévy visits a jail, Riker's Island, which offers the advantage of being in New York's harbor, allowing a certain notoriety and a stunning contrast between the city of cities and the exile of incarceration. Irresistible. Some pages later, Lévy visits another prison, the even more famous Alcatraz, in San Francisco's even more beautiful harbor. Of course, Alcatraz is no longer used as a prison, but no matter—the symmetries were evidently too good to pass up.

Lévy is also interested in religion in America, so he sets off to visit an Amish colony. The Amish are a tiny sect of Protestants who reject modern technology and therefore may be seen living in nineteenth-century fashion, with horses and buggies and so forth. The Amish are sufficiently exotic to be the topic of a Hollywood movie starring Harrison Ford (which, naturally, Lévy mentions). Similarly, like Tocqueville and any number of Europeans since Rousseau, Lévy is interested in Indians, and so he visits a number of aging radicals in the West to discuss Wounded Knee, with predictable results. Lévy must say something about black people, so he interviews Barack Obama, son of an African goatherd, Harvard Law graduate, and star of the Democratic party. The United States is huge, and wondrous things are to be found.

Journalism reports, but to what end? Like its signature medium, photography, journalism is rarely completely untrue. The photographed event occurred and was mechanically documented. Even advertisements are true in this sense: A beautiful woman got into a car—that really happened. The implication that one should buy the car is a much more dubious proposition. Riker's Island is in America; the Amish are indeed an American sect; Barack Obama is certainly both black and American. But they are all unusual, even exotic, and oh-so vivid, and therefore it is difficult to draw general lessons from them. Lévy says some sensible things, and some silly things, but overall the impression is, well, journalistic: a bit sensational, not entirely wrong, and interesting, even amusing.

In an effort to tie his range of images together, and because he evidently thinks it explains American politics, Lévy uses "religion" as a master metaphor. In his account, many things are churches, including shopping malls, race tracks, museums, and various actual churches. Unfortunately, as he confesses, he has almost no understanding of what goes on in actual churches, which somewhat undercuts the trenchancy of his metaphor. But no matter—Lévy soldiers on, visiting Christian fundamentalists in various places, orthodox Jews in Brooklyn, and a black congregation. From this experience, Lévy reports that he has been convinced that southern black congregations "have an intensity of piety" that northern white suburban "megachurches" do not.

The articles are full of gaffes. Most are minor, and many reveal the faulty knowledge and lack of context that anyone who tries to understand a foreign culture must confront. For example, Lévy says that the French but not the Americans debate the purposes of punishment. But punishment, including capital punishment, has been a huge and very public debate since at least the 1970s, when much of the American electorate lost faith

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in the idea of rehabilitation. An enormous legal literature exists, and just a few months ago, the Supreme Court decided a major pair of cases, *United States v. Booker* and *United States v. Fanfan*, on criminal sentencing in the federal courts that again brought the issue onto the front page of all the major papers. In short, the idea that punishment is not debated in America is just silly, whatever one may think about the outcome of such debates.

Some of Lévy's mistakes, however, are not minor, at least insofar as the project is to describe America. Addressing his central concern, the politics of right and left, Lévy concludes that the United States has recently become ideological, in contrast to the French, who have outgrown their history of ideology. Thus, by implication, the success of President Bush (whom Lévy opposes) is explained by a sort of ideological madness. Conversely, in a hilarious passage, Lévy can find no higher praise for losing presidential candidate John Kerry than "rationalist" and "European." (Seattle, a port for the Northern Pacific and Lévy's favorite American city, is also called "European," which evidently means "good," and sometimes also means "French.") Thus, when Americans in the last election turned away from the European rationalist and voted for Bush—only ideology could explain something like that.

Lévy clearly believes that the roots of what he considers to be the ideological madness of the Americans lie in the religiosity of Americans. His political perspective is highly orthodox for a modern day *philosophe*, a classically Enlightened understanding of the relationships among politics and faith, in which history, or at least progress, is a process of secularization. Nonetheless, Lévy is on to a real issue. The United States is undergoing a period of political and social polarization, and Lévy thinks, *contra* the French cliché about the pragmatism of Americans, that this polarization is caused by the recent discovery of ideological politics.

But, as he knows, this is far too simple. The United States was founded, like no nation before and perhaps since, on the basis of ideas. Ideas, while rarely viewed as "ideology" in the Marxist sense, have always been absolutely central to political discourse in a country whose inhabitants share so little. Americans have typically referred to the United States itself as an experiment, a trial of ideas, rather than a patrimony. And, of course, ideology in the self-consciously partisan sense is not unknown in our history, especially in the twentieth century's explicitly ideological struggles in both World Wars and the Cold War. The claim that America recently discovered ideology does little to explain current developments.

At least, does little to explain current developments to an American. Lévy devotes almost no attention to: the culture of business, the middle class, patterns of work, patterns of consumption, suburbia (he discusses American cities), education (in which America is spectacularly successful *and* disastrous), the poor (except as represented in literature or by politicians), various forms of cultural production (despite the constant mention of movies), democracy, and perceptions of space and nature and history and risk and home, all of which are quite different in America than in Western Europe.

On reflection, one comes to understand that Lévy's real topic is not America; Lévy's topic is France's imagination of America. More specifically, Lévy addresses the tendencies of French thought, including a fair dose of nationalism, anti-Semitism, and the like, that can be expressed in socially acceptable fashion as "anti-Americanism." This has been one of his topics for many years, but the present assignment gives Lévy the opportunity to discuss anti-Americanism not in the abstract, in the context of café prejudices, but in the context of actual travels and interviews. America, it is evidently hard to remember in certain circles, is an actual place, not just an idea vaguely synonymous with "imperial" or "consumer."

In general, the Americans emerge from Lévy's portrait as friendly, energetic, even passionate, and basically good hearted. They are open, quite willing to share. Very credulous, and so sometimes very wrong. They are more than a little primitive, especially politically and intellectually, but they are not barbaric. They are polite, tolerant rather than domineering. Americans even drive politely, sharing the road in egalitarian fashion. Though many people tell him what they think, Lévy reports few arguments in the sense of debates. At one of the new breed of modern suburban churches, inflected by middle-class business culture (which Lévy loathes), he was urged to "say the atheist's prayer." A tiresome hostess at a "bed and breakfast" inn told him of the necessity of liking almost all one's guests. And so forth. Although he is often harshly judgmental in print (he is a Parisian intellectual), Lévy seems to get along with most of the people he meets.

This warm portrait of the Americans is comforting to the French, too. When Tocqueville wrote, France was still the second most powerful nation on the planet. The geopolitical situation has changed, and so it is good to hear that the Americans are nicer than many people say. Moreover, Lévy makes clear that the Americans are still quite simple and provincial. They believe everything. They have little taste. Lévy could not, as an intellectual, write that all of his reader's prejudices have

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been confirmed by his trip to America. So he writes that the prejudices, especially the negative ones, are overdone. The military is not imperial; the people are not fat. But the big picture—the French image of Americans as a strangely childlike religious people, simply not as civilized as the French—is confirmed.

Lévy could write a book on America that would be far more challenging for his French and American audiences than these articles. He could, for example, write much more deeply about how multiple political identities work in America. American identity happens on another plane from cultural identity—hence the conflicts that Lévy expects between American and Mexican, or even American and Arab, identity are rare. One is Mexican or Jewish or Arab, or something non-national like gay or Asian, as well as American. Thus it is subtly wrong to understand flags, or the military, in the sense of competition among nations in a European sense. Most Americans have little serious cognizance of other nations; there is no competition. This is, of course, beyond arrogant. It is an echo of the revolutionary presumptions of the United States (and one of the things Tocqueville was trying to capture); an analogy might be drawn to the French tendency to speak for civilization itself.

Then, too, in paying attention to traditional cities, Lévy misses one of the largest migrations in human history. Millions upon millions of people have been moving to lower density living and working environments. Not merely to suburbia, but moving to places where there is no city, or the city is functionally irrelevant. Much of America is booming, and has been for decades. Very small towns are undergoing a renaissance of sorts, but as pleasant places to live while working in the new economy, rather than as autonomous economic units. Suppose cities, instead of being the site of civilized life, are just an arrangement dictated by the needs of commerce at the level of transportation technology? Suppose Atlanta, hundreds of kilometers of trees and traffic with no discernible center, a highly populated forest, represents the future of cities? What would this mean for the United States? For France?

As perhaps suggested by the fact that so much of the built environment of the United States is new, Lévy might also have noticed the physical energy in the United States. For example, he goes to a small-car race. Typically, his attention is drawn by a prayer, which leads to yet another meditation on religion. Lost in these thoughts, Lévy seems not to have understood what a huge phenomenon car racing in America is.

And not just watching car races: this is a really big country, and engines and gas are cheap. Ordinary people race cars or trucks. Bruce Springsteen sings about racing in the streets; dentists buy Harley Davidsons and ride around in packs in celebration of motorcycle gangs and Vietnam veterans. And something like this lustiness typifies American capitalism, characterizes the swashbuckling entrepreneurialism that so enchanted Schumpeter. In comparison, much of European bureaucratic modernity seems rather pallid. Rephrased, Lévy's praise of Kerry as a rationalist European goes a long way toward explaining why Kerry lost.

What Lévy of all people could write is, after Tocqueville, *Celebrity in America.* Lévy visits striking places, meets all the right people, and shamelessly drops names. He introduces places and topics with references to movies, and generally burnishes his persona as the famous intellectual, at ease and at large, attended, we are told, by a comely assistant named Anika. This is very funny, and at times ascends into farce: Trying to get an interview with Kerry during the presidential campaign, Lévy complains about being put "in the second plane, the wrong one, the one without the candidate." Is nothing sacred for these Americans? Don't they understand who I am? But perhaps celebrity is inevitable in a world in which communication and political organization encompass people who share so little. And perhaps political thought, if it is to be heard under present circumstances, must compromise with celebrity. What does this mean for the politics of a "rationalist," as Lévy claims to be?

This may be the wrong thing to ask. Tocqueville and Lévy are not really similar. Tocqueville went to America in 1831, when he was twenty-five. He spent nine months traveling and published *Democracy in America* in two stages over the next nine years. Lévy has traveled through America in considerable comfort over the last year or so, and almost immediately began publishing his impressions. While Lévy had a driver named Tim and the lovely Anika for traveling companions, Tocqueville was accompanied by his friend Gustave de Beaumont. On their American journey, Tocqueville worked incessantly, while Beaumont often relaxed, sometimes playing a flute. Tocqueville was dead of tuberculosis at fifty three. In contrast to Tocqueville but like Beaumont, Lévy is a conversationalist, a socialite, *médiatique* rather than aloof. Lévy is already fifty six, appears to be in excellent health, and by all accounts leads a sunny life.

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The Truth About Religious Freedom

Michael Novak

Just now, as Islamic nations wrestle both with new theoretical ideas and new public policies concerning religious liberty, there may be an opportune moment for reviewing how crucial religious liberty is for democracy. There are rival theories about this. Atheists in Europe have their own approach to religious liberty. In personal life, they do not take religion seriously, naturally, but they do recognize it as a social reality that needs to be dealt with. Politically, however, their aim since the French Revolution of 1789 has been to expel religion from public life and confine it to the private sphere. They have attempted to place the state firmly over religion so the state dominates all spheres of public life. By such "secularization" and "laicization," the secularists hope to speed the inexorable decline of religion, for they are certain that the future will be less religious than the past—and that this will be a good thing.

In the English-speaking world, the pattern has been different. Some Anglo-Americans share the sentiments of the French. But most have recognized that religion has a serious place in both public and private life. The Anglo-Americans developed two different defenses of liberty of conscience. One is based on nonreligious premises, open to atheists as well as believers in God who value philosophical argument for its own sake. The other is based on religious conceptions, particularly the Abrahamic vision of the Creator and Sovereign over all things.

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The nonreligious view is that, by nature, each human person is responsible for accepting or rejecting evidence presented to the individual consciousness, and thus each person is responsible for choosing a way of life. This responsibility gives rise to a human right to make such choices—and the right is inalienable, for no one can make those choices for another. In this sense, the conscience of all must be respected as inviolable.

The religious defense of religious liberty is somewhat different. In thinking about these questions at the time of the American Founding, such figures as Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, and James Madison expressed the belief of most Americans that the world was made by a benevolent Creator and Governor Who wished to extend His friendship to all human beings and Who wished to be thanked and worshiped in spirit and truth and purity of conscience. In other words, this God could not be deceived by mere outward acts, but saw directly into the human heart. Here is how they expressed it in the Virginia Declaration of Religious Liberty of 1776: "That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed by only reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore, all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance, love, and charity towards each other."

The argument contains four affirmations: the *greatness* of the Creator; the *duty* of the creature to recognize, be grateful to, and adore that Creator; the

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freedom of soul that the Creator endowed in humans for such acts; and the *friendship* with humans that God desired. With these affirmations as its base, The Virginia Declaration—like the famous Remonstrance against the Governor of Virginia circulated for signatures by James Madison some years later—made the following argument: Every rational creature, contemplating the great gifts bestowed by the Creator, is conscious of a duty to give due worship to that Creator, in spirit and in truth, in the pure light of conscience, under no coercion whatever. Since this duty is sacred, and prior to all other duties either to civil society or to the state, since it is a duty owed by the creature directly to the Creator without intermediary, this duty also implies a right. Since this duty goes beyond any earthly power, it must entail a right to exercise that duty, which may be abridged by no earthly power. It is an inalienable and an inviolable right. It is prior to every other duty. It must be exercised in conscience and without duplicity or coercion, in the direct sight of the Creator.

The religious foundation for religious liberty, therefore, begins with the nature of God. It also sketches out its conviction about the nature of human beings: that we are born free and equal to all others in freedom before God, and that, independent of the state, each of us owes duties to our Creator. Based on these convictions, the religious justification of religious liberty as expressed by the Virginians is founded on the natural rights of human beings, as these have been endowed in human beings by their Creator.

So thorough and profound are these rights, moreover, they are not limited to Jews or Christians, but possessed by all human creatures—Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists alike, together with atheists and agnostics. For all are given their liberty directly by the Creator, in the act of creating human beings. From before time was, the Creator knew each individual by name and called all to Himself—but allowed to all the right to accept or to reject that invitation, according to their own conscience.

I believe that this justification is particularly beautiful because those who first came to it, and proposed it for formal ratification, which it received, established it for all other human beings equally, far beyond their own immediate circle. They claimed nothing for themselves that they did not recognize also belonged to all other human beings. That is why they referred to *natural* rights. These are founded not in culture nor ethnicity nor tribe nor religious denomination, but in all human beings equally. Their historical root may have been discovered by one particular religious group in human history, but their philosophical and practical application (if they are true) is universal.

The early Americans were not only the Virginians, but also the Pennsylvanians, who in some ways solved some problems of religious liberty even more successfully, and the men of Massachusetts, who put in place yet another alternative. When, together, the Founders put together the Constitution of the United States in 1787, and when they added the Bill of Rights in 1792, they declared the federal Congress incompetent to make any law respecting the establishment of religion or inhibiting the free exercise thereof. This is the way in which they provided for the so-called "separation of church and state." They did not want the *federal Congress* to impose any one religion on them. They took the government out of the business of religion.

In this way, too, they prevented any one religion from becoming the official "established" and in some way mandatory religion of the people as a whole. (An individual state could have an established religion, and some did, for a generation or so, but the practice soon proved to be impracticable and irksome to both the church and state.) Experience showed them that both the church and the state prospered more when the officials of the church did not make political decisions with the authority of the state and when the state did not make authoritative religious statements.

Certainly, the churches have prospered better under such a regime in America than the more or less established churches of Europe. The American solution, however, is not properly described as the "separation of church and state." Its actual practice is more like an "accommodation," each treating the other to public acts of mutual exposure and mutual respect. At many religious ceremonies, officials of the state are present in formal ways. At many state functions, ceremonies begin with a prayer and often conclude with a religious blessing. Quite often a sermon by a clergyman is written into the program. Above all, politicians in America speak often of God, and sometimes with observable seriousness and devotion—and also sometimes in a more or less perfunctory way. But speak of God they almost all do, especially on formal political occasions.

It has often been remarked, for instance, that President George W. Bush seems unusually serious about religion and speaks of God fairly openly. But close observers have also noted that President Bill Clinton used to speak about God even *more* often than Bush and was perhaps even rather more ostentatious in being in church each Sunday. In fact, every American president has felt the duty to speak of God, since that

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is what the American people want and expect of them.

Still, although the "separation of church and state" is in part a misnomer, it does point to an important difference of function and public role. But that "separation" is not the same thing as demanding an end to the interpenetration of religion and society. *Church* and *state* do not cover the same territory as *religion* and *society. Church* and *state* are narrower, institutional concepts. Citizens have a right to the free exercise of their religion in private *and* in the full range of the public activities of civil society. They also have a right to follow their religious conscience in public life, consistent with fidelity to their public duties and to the Constitution of the United States. And they have a right to argue in the public square, in accord with the rules of democratic give-and-take and the civic virtues of civility, for their own convictions, religious or secular, about the full range of issues of our common life, including laws concerning marriage, birth, and death. Civic life can be quite alive with religion, the more so for being uncoerced by the state.

To present a few samples of how the American accommodation of religion and society, church and state, have actually worked out in practice, let me mention that in the earliest days of Washington, D.C., beginning with the Jefferson Administration (1800-1808), the largest church service in the whole United States was held in the Capitol Building every Sunday, with music provided at government expense by the U.S. Marine Band. President Jefferson was often in attendance. Both before and after Jefferson, both the Congress and the presidents have often by decree urged Americans to pause for a Day of Thanksgiving, or Fasting and Humiliation in an hour of need.

Recently, Pope Benedict XVI and the president of the Italian Senate, Marcello Pera, have teamed up to write two books, *Without Roots* and *The Europe of Benedict: In the Crisis of Cultures*, concerning the moral crisis prompted in the West by the rise of secularism—and, along with it, a fresh revival of relativism and even nihilism. In its beginnings, secularism seems like a healthy advance, providing a path to peaceful pluralism at the end of a long historical series of religious wars—or at least wars in which religion played some part (for often quite worldly powers, rivalries, and interests were actually the cause of such strife). Similarly, atheism and agnosticism at first seem benign, for many who embrace them go on living almost as if they still were religious, according to civilized values of the religious past, with mercy, charity, compassion, and other high qualities. Sometimes they seem even more moral than religious people of their own generation.

Atheism, however, as Benedict points out, may be a position of passionate commitment, but it cannot be a position of reason. No man knows enough about the conditions of existence to know for certain that there is no God. For this reason, too, agnosticism seems like a far more tenable intellectual position, and a more plausibly and attractively moral position as well. It seems modest and humble, open and thoughtful. There seems to be much in agnosticism to admire.

Still, the pope goes on, theory is one thing and practice is another. Agnosticism may be attractive as a theory, because of its modesty, but in practice human beings cannot be so neutral. In practice, we must live either as though God exists or as though God does not exist. Which of these practical roads agnostics choose to follow makes a great difference in their actual conduct. A mind open to God tends to be open to many arguments, that to one who lives as if there is no God are likely to seem dim and obscure. Pope Benedict puts matters this way: A purely secular society living as if there is no God tends to value individual liberty before any other good. This preference is proposed as public policy on the ground that it is the most democratic principle, and on the grounds that all other policies are more dangerous threats against democracy. But this preference cannot be long maintained without falling into impossible contradictions.

For instance, the individual woman who chooses to have an abortion may seem to be exercising a fundamental human right of choice and thus, by reason of various complexities in her own life, even be entitled to our sympathies. Still, her choice necessarily demands the destruction of another individual life, that of the infant in formation in her womb, significantly different from hers. In this way, secularism ends up not treating all individuals as equal. Rather, it privileges some human individuals more than others.

In addition, secularism ends up destroying a fundamental principle of democracy, in the process of boasting that it alone protects democracy. For in granting the more powerful party (the individual woman) the right to exercise violence to destroy the weaker party (the infant in her womb), it privileges might over right. But it is the fundamental democratic principle, its very foundation, to privilege right over might. Secularism thus ends up, in its moral self-contradictions, destroying what it claims to love above all: democracy and pluralism. And abortion is not the only instance of this self-contradiction.

The greatest danger of secularism is that it steadily undercuts natural law, moral reason, and religion—in the name of privileging personal preference, taste, and selection. It tends first toward moral relativism and then begins sliding toward moral nihilism. There

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remains little or nothing in the moral arsenal of secularism to slow a cultural tendency toward decadence or to empower a wave of moral awakening. Mesmerized by the glowing attraction of the individual as the central unit of moral analysis—together with the elevation of personal preference over objective reason and the priority of will over intelligence—secularism tends to hold that moral truth cannot be grasped by the human mind. All there is to rely on is personal preference. In matters of social conflict, then, it is inexorable that power must become the ultimate adjudicating force. Power, stripped of appeal to objective reason.

Although this is the inner logic of secularism, we are saved for a time from its most dire effects by the slow drag of tradition and cultural inhibition. While the road of decline is slippery, total decadence takes time. But the logic does tend to rush onward, meeting ever less resistance, for secularism is no firm basis for democracy. It does not have any moral foundation on which to base democracy. Nor has it sufficient resources to inspire the virtues necessary for the practice of democracy. What Abraham Lincoln called "the silent artillery of time" wears down the strengths secularism has borrowed from the past.

Not to put too fine a point on it, there are few resources in secularism for justifying the claim that all men are born equal—which certainly flies in the face of empirical observation. Few resources for the appeal to fraternity. Few resources for the appeal to human liberty. Few resources for that crucial value of modern progressive liberalism, compassion for the poor and the weak. And on what precise basis does secularism determine the measure of progress, particularly moral progress? Mere preference does not really advance that argument.

What the West calls secularism is in fact in large measure a heavy draw on the religious heritage of Abrahamic religion. That is the deepest source of current liberal ideas of liberty, fraternity, equality, compassion, and progress. In fact, it is more owing to the specifically Christian values of the past that Communism was decisively defeated, bloodlessly, by Solidarity, the Polish labor union, and other dissidents who at last refused to be complicit in the Soviet regime of the lie. Both Fascism and Communism ran aground on the natural law of human existence, for they were based on false, inadequate, and stunted moral anthropologies. It proved impossible for humans to live under such false philosophies. And, thus, even contemporary secularism owes its current peaceful thriving to the recent victory over its deadly enemies, Fascism and Marxism, by the religions (and their morality of nature and reason) that it despises.

In order for democracy to thrive, it does not need to be based on secularism. In fact, secularism is a most unsure basis for democratic survival. The struggle of Islamic nations to move to democracy is placing considerable pressure upon our existing Western theories. The French solution is strongly rejected by many Muslims who are already rebelling against the total identification of religion and politics, mosque and state in traditional Muslim regimes. The differences between the American solution, with its positive evaluation of religion, and the non-religious or even anti-religious theories of secularism is not so widely known. But the American notion that the goal is an accommodation of religion and society, along with the separate functions of church and state, can open up a new vista for Muslim thinkers. This immense and epoch-making upheaval is bound to simulate fresh and original thinking by placing even the American solution within a new context. FT

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The Writing Life

Ralph M. McInerny

It is the rare reader of fiction who does not at some time or other consider becoming a writer. It comes and goes over the years for many, and some carry it about forever as an unredeemed promissory note to themselves. In their heart of hearts, they regard themselves as writers. When my first novel appeared, I got a note from a senior colleague to the effect that it was sly of me not only to *think* of writing a novel but actually to do it. The capacity, apparently, like depravity for Calvin, was taken to be universal.

In my early teens I saw myself as a writer. I became fascinated with biographies of authors, and I idolized the upperclassmen who produced the poems and stories and articles for the school magazine. Throughout my nonhazardous hitch in the Marine Corps I thought of myself as prepping for the commencement of my writing career. My return to the seminary did not really alter this. In my seminary years I wrote a verse play and even began a novel. With my veteran's allowance I bought a box full of past numbers of the *Partisan Review*, and in poring over them I came upon J.F. Powers' story "St. Paul Home of the Saints."

Powers was a layman, but he was a legend among the priests I had known in Minnesota. His *Prince of Darkness and Other Stories* showed such an uncanny knowledge of the trivia of local clerical life that it was presumed he had some priestly informant who fed him gossip for his stories. His portrait of Archbishop John Gregory Murray in the title story of that collection seemed drawn from life. What the significance was for me that this layman wrote about priests I could not then guess, but it was as if some barrier had been removed.

When I left the seminary for the second time, certain now that the priesthood was not my vocation, I was not the same man who entered. I began graduate studies in philosophy. Philosophical prose is for the most part as distant from the imaginative use of language as one can get. Dullness is all. Dullness and clarity, that is. At the age of twenty-two, any literary ambitions of mine were going to have to be compatible with my academic involvement. Among the books I bought in the summer before graduate school were W.H. Auden's *Collected Poetry* and his more recent *Nones.* They are still on my shelves. Writing in the fullest sense meant poetry, and everything else declined from that like cases of a noun. And so, working nights in the bottle house of the Grain Belt beer company, I would wake in the attic bedroom of my grandmother's house in Minnesota and try to write poetry. When graduate school began and I spent a couple of months working nights on a punch press, I found myself surrounded by people who considered themselves artists. One of them confided to me that his ambition was to write pornographic novels. He mentioned an author whose descriptions of mating were so metaphorically sedate that they would have sailed over innocent heads. So he had a mission. If you're going to write a dirty book, make it dirty. I have often thought of that fellow.

At the University of Minnesota and at Laval, at first single and then married, I continued to write. I sent a Christmas poem to fellow students and to some of the faculty, and Charles De Koninck was impressed all out of proportion to the value of the poems I showed him. (Later I would discover that he had attempted to write a novel.) During the months that I was writing my dissertation I was also at work on a novel. It is penitential

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for me to even page through those early efforts. There was another novel written in Omaha, and yet another when we moved to South Bend in August 1955. I sat at the dining room table in my bathing trunks because of the ungodly heat and wrote. Over the years I would occasionally write a short story and mail it in, my preferred target being the *New Yorker.* It would come back (in Thurber's phrase) like a serve in tennis. What I remember about those years was how episodic my efforts were. After I sent off a story, I would wait as if for news of the Nobel Prize. Rejection was cushioned by no work in progress. I was not serious.

On January 16, 1964, I decided to get serious. We had moved into the house on Portage Avenue and were overextended. Getting through the month was depressingly reminiscent of days we thought we had left behind forever. I took on teaching a couple courses at the branch of Indiana University in South Bend, adding those to my daily chores at Notre Dame, but this was peanuts. I remembered the copy of *Writer's Digest* I had bought in the Los Angeles train station in 1946. I decided that I would write for commercial markets, not just sporadically, but determinedly, every day, and keep at it for a year, after which if I had not sold anything I would admit to myself that I was not really a writer.

And so it began. In the basement was a workbench, unlikely to serve its original purpose for me. It became my desk. It was L shaped. I plunked my typewriter on the short leg of the L and, standing, began. Every night, after we had put the kids to bed, I would go downstairs and write from ten until about two in the morning. The markets I was chiefly interested in were *Redbook, Ladies' Home Journal,* and *Good Housekeeping.* Their initial price for a story was a thousand dollars. I sent stories out, but I was always ready with others when they came back. There was never a time when I wasn't awaiting editorial word on one or more stories. This gave room for hope. In April I began to get messages on the rejection slips and then a letter from an editor at *Redbook,* Sandra Earl, telling me "close but no cigar," and urging me to keep trying.

Those early times at my converted workbench were, I came to see, my apprenticeship. For someone who aspired to write fiction I was almost totally ignorant of how a story is made. The slick magazines operated on the Edgar Alan Poe principle that a story aims at a single effect. No sideshows, nothing that does not contribute to the point of the story. I would sometimes be asked what paragraph three on page seven was meant to do, would read it, find it lovely writing but effectively idle in the story. Out it went. I was learning that one writes for a reader. Writing is too often described as self-expression. But writing is the art of making a story that will engage and hold and satisfy the interest of the reader. I typed a slogan and pinned it over my typewriter: *Nobody Owes You A Reading.*

What I thought were stories piled up on the workbench. With time I began to see why they were rejected: They weren't stories. A story needs an attractive or at least intriguing character facing a crucial choice. The story is the account of his making it, solving his problem, resolving a dilemma. His efforts worsen rather than ease his situation. Eventually he arrives at the dark moment when all seems lost. Then, by his own efforts, plausibly but surprisingly, he succeeds. The end. A variation on this is the villain whose pursuit of his evil goal triumphs over one obstacle after another until, just as ultimate success seems assured, surprisingly but plausibly, he goes down in flames.

Is this formula fiction? Well, you can find this account of imaginative portrayals of human agents in Aristotle's *Poetics.* The structure I have just sketched is of course the plot, what gives a narrative a beginning, a middle, and an end, in Aristotle's pithy phrase. Or, in Peter De Vries' version: a beginning, a muddle, and an end. Plot is not everything, but it is the soul of the story.

The themes of the stories I wrote for the magazines were domestic—the kids going to camp, recitals, trouble at school. All I had to do was look around my house and see the germs of stories. Before the year was out, I sold my first story, "The First Farewell," to *Redbook.* It was based on my daughters' going to school in Louvain.

I began publishing under a pseudonym, Ernan Mackey, an anagram on my family name, to keep my fiction separate from my academic career. At the beginning I felt more divided than I did later between two non-overlapping kinds of writing. I went to New York and met the editors with whom I had been corresponding. Sandy Earl took me around the *Redbook* offices and showed me the reports the fiction department prepared and explained the politicking involved in getting a story accepted. She, I now realized, was my champion there. I watched the receptionist, who served as the first reader of unsolicited manuscripts, draw pages from a manila envelope, read a few lines, let the pages drop back, and set it aside for rejection. As often as not, that woman did not have to read more than a few lines to tell whether it was a story or not, and if it was, whether it would be of interest to *Redbook*'s readers.

Every published writer is the beneficiary of luck. Among my good fortune was the fact that editors began to treat me as if they were my aunts. They were all women, of course. There were no men in the fiction

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departments. On one of my visits to New York, three or four editors from different magazines sat me down in the Algonquin, plied me with manhattans, and discussed my career. It was now three years since my big resolution. I was selling stories regularly. One year I sold more stories to *Redbook* than anyone else ever had, using several pen names. It was the consensus of the group that I was ready for more. I needed an agent. They supplied me with a short list of agents they had agreed on, and I went around to their offices and in effect interviewed them.

It was Henry Volkening who became my first agent. Henry's office was in the French Building on Park Avenue. He had the diffidence of a drinker, and indeed when he took me to the Century Club for lunch, we largely drank it, or at least Henry did, ringing the bell on the table for another martini and unnecessarily telling me not to try to keep up with him. Listening to him sum up his own career made me realize that he was my connection with the mythical past. He had begun at Scribner's, where no less an editor than Maxwell Perkins had told him that there was more need for good agents than for another editor. So with Diarmid Russell, the son of the Irish writer who signed himself "AE," he founded an agency. Eudora Welty has written a book about her long association with the agency, and in it there are photographs of the partners in their youth. The Henry I came to know had a valedictory air. From the outset, he let me know he didn't like my use of a pseudonym: "It's hard enough to make one name famous, let alone two." He said things like that. He was not thinking of my magazine stories. Something had happened.

It was the spring of 1965. I had written a piece for *America* magazine called "Thomism in an Age of Renewal." Jack Bernard, an editor at Doubleday, saw it and wrote to ask if I would like to develop it into a book. I did. Later, at lunch in New York with Jack, I listened to him say nice things about the manuscript I had turned in. He liked the way I wrote. I told him that I also wrote fiction. "Really? Have you ever thought of writing a novel?" If I hadn't, I would have thought of it then and there. There was a story I had written under the influence of J. P. Donleavy called "Jolly Rogerson." I had sent it to the *Paris Review* and there it sat, unrejected but untaken. That story came into my mind and suddenly seemed part of something larger. "Yes," I said. "I am thinking of writing a novel."

When I set out to write *Jolly Rogerson* I was in a very different situation than I had been when I wrote those dubious novels of yore. Writing short stories had forced me to learn the basics of technique, things that were applicable to longer as well as shorter efforts. One effect of short-story writing was that I conceived and wrote the novel in segments which were about the length of a magazine story (then more or less 3,500 words). The only guide I had as I set out, apart from the short story that went almost unchanged into the second part of the novel, was a list of three words: Failure, Success, Beyond.

I was to write two more novels featuring Matthew Rogerson: *Rogerson at Bay* and *The Search Committee*. I am now distant enough from them that I can read them, and in the privacy of my own mind, I tell myself that I was pretty good in those days. Rogerson is forty four, which seemed an advanced age to me as I wrote the first novel. He is a flop in every department of his life—in his marriage, as a father, as a teacher. The first part ends with Rogerson vowing to accept his fate and to elevate his failure to epic proportions. And of course in the second part these efforts to fail are shown to fail, and Rogerson is suddenly covered with all the emblems of success. The third part takes him to the point of rejecting both the concepts of success and those of failure. Those were good hours spent standing at my typewriter, from time to time looking up at *Nobody Owes You A Reading*. The basement windows are open, it is summer, I can hear my children playing in the yard. Connie is out there too, gardening. It was the best of times.

It was because I was so conscious of the chanciness of what I was doing that I did not burden Connie with a lot of details. What had she thought when I said I would make extra money by writing fiction? She knew that I had been writing fiction since we met. She knew of the novels, not least of them *If Salt Lose Its Savor* (a book as bad as its title) which I had written the first summer in South Bend, and *The Middle of Next Week*, the mystery novel I had written on Rexford Drive. These, like the stories that had gone off over the years, had led to nothing. Why should it be any different now? Well, I was serious now. And Connie would have seen that seriousness because of the schedule I had devised. But we never sat around and discussed my future as a writer. *Jolly Rogerson* got good reviews, and everyone seemed pleased, not that it sold a lot of copies. Among the things it meant was that my writing could now rejoin its original aspiration.

Second novels are notoriously fateful. Can one repeat a successful performance? I started to write *A Narrow Time* in an A-frame cottage on the shore of Lake Michigan, where we were vacationing with the kids. I was out to dazzle and amaze. The novel would be experimental; there would be parts that would be written as scenes in a play (shades of *This*

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Side of Paradise), and it would be impressive. In short, I was showing off, drawing attention to myself. Anne Freedgood had succeeded Jack Bernard as my editor at Doubleday. She gently steered me away from all the razzle dazzle. All it took was an oblique question or two about what I showed her; I looked at it again and saw how sophomoric it was. I started over, remembered what I had learned, and wrote the novel. It deals with the effect on a young couple of losing a child. It was risky for me to take on such a theme, and perhaps that was why I had tried to obscure it with fireworks. It is a sad and funny story, better, I think, than *Jolly Rogerson*.

In the fall of 1969, in Rome, I drafted what would become *The Priest*, some thirteen hundred pages of manuscript. I had yet to meet the agent I had hooked up with after Henry Volkening died. I was her client for a little more than a year. She nearly put me out of business. I had been selling stories regularly, and she could not sell one. Worse, I sent her what I was working on, and she treated it as a finished product and showed it to Anne Freedgood. In the course of one year, my name was mud at the magazines and at Doubleday. I had left the country with a publisher; I returned a writer whose third novel seemed to have bombed.

This was a tough time. Taking a family to Europe, having six kids in private schools, travel, all the rest, costs a lot. I was happy: We had depleted our savings to make the year memorable, and it had been. Home again, however, I realized how dependent we had become on my earnings as a writer. My predicament was worse than I had let on to Connie. I could very well have been finished. But I got back on my old schedule, and I tried to revive the novel.

It was set in 1968, and the central character was a young priest, Frank Ascue, just returned from Rome to begin teaching moral theology at the Fort Elbow, Ohio, seminary. The question I had put myself was: What is it like to be a young priest today when the Church seems to be reeling in postconciliar factionalism? I had envisaged a short, focused book, but the more I thought of it the more various and complicated the background seemed. I expanded my cast and multiplied subplots. Then I got a phone call from the agent Theron Raines. This was 1971. Theron was enthusiastic about what I had sent him. He spoke matter-of-factly of its being a major novel. After the doldrums I had been in, this was more than welcome news. We became agent and client, and with Theron's encouragement—his ability to convey enthusiasm in a voice that suggested he was dropping off to sleep—I rewrote my novel and we called it *The Priest*.

The Priest is the only bestseller I have had. In hardback, bookclub editions, and paperback, it sold more than a million copies. Having written of a young priest, I began to ask what Church looks like to an old priest. And so I next wrote *Gate of Heaven*, which is set in a retirement home for priests who see everything they gave their lives to crumbling around them. The new novel was not only churchy, it was clerical, and there was scarcely a character in it less that seventy years old. It was published in 1975. It was not a bestseller. I detected a note of disappointment. I have sometimes wondered how things would have gone if, instead of writing *Gate of Heaven* next, I had written the sequel to *Jolly Rogerson* that followed it, *Rogerson at Bay*.

Some writers write a lot, others write little, and this has nothing to do with whether they write well or badly. One man's haste is another's jogging, and vice versa. Over the years I have collected literary biography, a practice that began more or less accidentally when I bought a remaindered copy of Mark Schorer's life of Sinclair Lewis, which should have put me off the genre. Seldom has a biographer taken a more condescending attitude toward his subject or measured him by standards wholly irrelevant to what he set out to do. That Lewis did not write for the *New Masses* is taken to be evidence that he was not serious. For all that, Lewis triumphed over his biographer. In reading lives of writers, I was particularly on the *qui vive* for information about the nuts and bolts of the writing life—its infrastructure, so to speak. How long did it take Lewis to write one of his novels, how much did he write each day? Where? When? With what? Trivia, perhaps, but it is what makes another writer vivid to me.

All this is to make the point that I write a lot. The way I started writing seriously, the urgency of succeeding, doggedly and daily sticking with it, led to a pile of manuscripts. I wrote something like sixty stories the first year, and, as I have said, most of them eventually found their way into print. The transition to novels suggested slowing down. To publish a novel a year would be to court the condescension long shown toward, say, the prolific Joyce Carol Oates. It seemed axiomatic to many reviewers that no one who wrote that much could do it well. And even when they found no signs of haste or sloppiness it was *de rigueur* to mention how much she published. So I suggested to Theron that it might be fun to add a pseudonym and write more. Perhaps these ruminations lay behind a suggestion he made in the summer of 1976.

He telephoned, and there was what passed for excitement in his voice. "I have a great idea." He had been reading Harry Kemelman's mystery series, which featured a rabbi. I had written two novels featuring priests. Why didn't I start a series using a priest detec-

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tive? My reaction was mixed. The suggestion seemed a regression. Mysteries? I had tried one, back in my dilettante days, but that didn't count. I had graduated from the slick magazines, I was now a serious *novelist.*

Two things decided me to respond to Theron's suggestion. I had made a study of Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe mysteries, reading them now as a writer, and seen that Stout did not have to know at the outset who did it. He could let that work itself out as he wrote. Many more ideas come in the course of writing than could ever come beforehand. Meanwhile, I had discovered that multiple viewpoint was my natural way of presenting a story. Could a mystery be told in this way? Agatha Christie, I discovered, had done it. By this time, I was very curious to see if I could bring it off.

In the summer of 1976, I gave some preliminary thought to the characters who would recur if a series developed. I began to have a notion of what Father Dowling was like. As a priest, he might seem to be observing everything from a lofty point of view, so I made him a recovered alcoholic, chastened by what he had been through and a better man and priest because of it. Another character would be Phil Keegan, a widower who had washed out of the seminary because he couldn't master Latin, who would be a police detective in Fox River, my imaginary Illinois town in the orbit of Chicago. And I thought of Marie Murkin, the housekeeper, inspired by one in a J.F. Powers story. I then drafted two novels with these characters, to see if I could do it, and to see if Theron thought I could. I sent them to him. He placed them with Vanguard. I was a mystery writer.

Beginning with *Her Death of Cold*, I have now published twenty-four Father Dowling mysteries. I have also published a great many other mysteries until now I am regarded, if regarded at all, as a mystery writer. From time to time I write a novel in the ordinary sense, but no one seems to await them with baited breath. I have not quite taken another lesson from Rex Stout. Before he published his first Nero Wolfe mystery, he published several turgid psychological novels no one now remembers. Once Nero Wolfe made a hit, Stout never looked back. He had found his niche and did not repine. To a great degree I have accepted my metamorphosis into a mystery writer. Theron's suggestion was the best he ever gave me. The thing about mysteries is that no one is going to think you write too many of them. If they are good, that is all that matters. If it is noticed that you write a lot, well, most mystery writers do, and they don't think it a bit unusual.

The beginning writer consciously and unconsciously mimics what he has read and liked—art imitates art—but a moment must come when his own voice emerges, his distinctive way of seeing things. For me, after many efforts, I first found my peculiar way of seeing things in "The First Farewell." I wouldn't try to define it abstractly. Others have tried, and I get a little superstitious about such descriptions. Who you are, or at least who you want to be, comes through with the stories you tell. If your assumptions are banal, received opinion, with the outlook of the advertisements that flank your story, then you will continue to be an imitation of an imitation. One need not be a revolutionary to have a distinctive way of seeing things that goes deeper than, if not against, the common grain.

As a Catholic my outlook may seem to be provided me. The believer has catechetical answers to the great questions. "What does it all mean?" becomes "Why did God make me?"—and the answer: "To know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life and be happy with Him forever in the next." Christians are supposed to imitate Christ. If that meant that their lives must be uniform and indistinguishable from one another, the question would arise as to why God created so many humans. The answer may be a variation on Tolstoy's comparison of happy and unhappy families. The calendar of the saints tells us that the more fervently and perfectly men and women imitate Christ, the more differentiated they become. It is we mediocrities or worse who seem to blend into one another, as predictable as our bad habits.

Well, the influence of one's religious belief on one's imagination is like that. All the great artists of western civilization were influenced one way or another by Christian revelation, but who would confuse Dante and Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Hawthorne and Emily Dickinson? All this may seem to be a presumptuous way for a minor writer like myself to view what he does. But one need not delude oneself in order to take seriously the task of writing. It is not the goal of writing to express oneself. The goal is the well-made story, something with a beginning, middle, and end, a portrayal of human agents.

To entertain a reader for a hour or two with a short story is no small thing. At first, of course, I had to learn the techniques required to catch and hold and satisfy the reader's interest, but from the outset there was, however faint, my own way of regarding human action. A given story is about particular actions, but one is implicitly saying something more; one's notion of what it all means, the point of deciding and choosing, of being this way rather than that, provides the backdrop for the particular story. If one made it a rule that this should always be left implic-

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it, counterexamples would come flooding in. Imagine *War and Peace* without Tolstoy's ruminations on history and providence. More ephemeral fiction probably reinforces received opinion, and the story fits neatly into the expected. The great authors, those to whom we go back again and again throughout our lives, Shakespeare and Dante, for example, are inexhaustible. It is not necessary that we, in an egalitarian or ideological swoon, equate Fitzgerald, Dickens, Trollope, Twain, or Cather with the very greatest, nor are most of us interested in any sort of exact calibration enabling us to place precisely on the spectrum this work or that. The appraisal of fiction is not arbitrary or subjective, although there is of course the subjective, personal element when we, in the privacy of our own homes, draw up a list of our one hundred great books.

So it was all right to take up the mystery genre. Even if mysteries function as fictional Kleenex—one use and they're gone—the same could be said for fiction generally. Only a writer can know the depression of seeing tables of remaindered novels, the bright jackets meant to allure, the lying testimonials, the hope and effort that went into the writing. And there they are, piled high, discounted in several senses, unwanted. That is the destiny of most books, certainly of most novels, mystery or not.

The first seven Father Dowling mysteries were published by Vanguard Press. Miriam and Evelyn Schrift at Vanguard were sisters-in-law; Miriam had married Evelyn's brother. Vanguard was a family affair, having been founded in the 1930s, and including among its authors James T. Farrell, Rex Stout, Saul Bellow, and Joyce Carol Oates. Miriam was my editor, and a more scrupulous one I have never had since. She pored over the text of my mysteries as if they were high on the list of the hundred great books. The two women were quite elderly when I became one of their authors. They could have been described as Manhattan Provincial. They had been outside their native city but once or twice; for that matter, they were unacquainted with most of the island on which they lived. But oh, such wonderful women they were. I must have appeared exotic to them, and when I brought my family to their offices on Madison Avenue, we had a regular picnic in the library, surrounded by the books the firm had published.

Anyone seeing Evelyn on the street, in any season but summer, would have been forgiven for thinking her a bag lady. She had a funny little helmet of a hat, with ear flaps, and she carried her work around in shopping bags. She lived in an apartment overlooking Central Park, near the Dakota. The apartment was as it had been when Evelyn's father was alive, and its shelves featured the books that he had designed. There was help, and a man I thought of as Igor who waited on the table. This was a huge piece of furniture, and there Evelyn and I would be at one end, with Igor scowling through his task.

After the Dowling series had been established, Theron Raines kiddingly said, "Now you'll have to do one about nuns." For these I used an obvious pen name, Monica Quill. They have never had the success of Father Dowling, but they have their devotees. With the advent of Sister Mary Teresa Dempsey it was established that I would publish two mysteries a year. I was also writing other things for Atheneum and then for Scribner's, but my mysteries were in the process of eclipsing those other efforts.

I was in Argentina on another Fulbright grant when I received a call from Ellen Levine, who became my agent after Theron and I amicably parted. There was movie interest in Father Dowling, and it was clear that Ellen longed to move me from Vanguard. Eventually I did move, and a blush comes to my face even now as I write that. It has been the fate of Vanguard to bring writers along and then, when they emerged from obscurity, to lose them to other publishers. The most recent case was Joyce Carol Oates. Miriam and I often talked of this. It seemed unimaginable to me that someone would leave this house. Vanguard fulfilled most of my fantasies about what a publisher should be like; its family atmosphere was an enormous plus. However I did succumb to Ellen's arguments, and they were cogent, that it would be a smart move for me to take my fiction to St. Martin's.

Leaving Vanguard and leaving Theron Raines are the two deeds I most regret in my writing career. Theron had éclat. His offices overlooked the New York Public Library, his partner was his wife, Joan, he had the dreamy look of a man who had known many women, and he had a dog that looked like an evolutionary throwback and would drool on one's knee during discussions.

Theron had been a Rhodes scholar and was in his way learned, but there came a time when his laid-back manner seemed comatose. Like most writers, I quickly became used to my good luck, thinking of it as merely part of the natural order, and hankered after more. Theron seemed undriven. And he was a fatalist. I think he genuinely believed that nothing we do can possibly influence or alter the future course of events. It was difficult to break from him. This was the man who had pulled my career out of its nadir. This was the man whose suggestion had turned me into a mystery writer. We had lunch at the Algonquin and I told him my discontents. He understood. But he wanted me to

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stay with him. He was almost urgent about it. I concluded that if I did, this luncheon conversation would stir him to new highs. Unfortunately, it didn't. I had agreed to stay with him another year. I did, and then I most reluctantly left him. My new agent was Ellen Levine.

Father Dowling was developed into a prime time television series by the same people who had been so successful with *Murder, She Wrote*. Donald Eastlake wrote the first script, and Tom Bosley played Father Dowling. It was Bosley who, more than anyone, ensured that the series had a three-year run. After the first year, the original network dropped it, but Bosley lobbied so strongly for the series that it was taken up by and enjoyed two more years in prime time on another network.

I had nothing to do with the series. The contract I had signed gave the rights for my characters to be developed for film and television. For the writer, television or studio film work inevitably is teamwork, and the writer is a relatively insignificant member of the team. One of the attractions of writing for me is that one can just sit down and do it, anywhere, anytime. It is a very solitary occupation. Even if my academic tasks had permitted joining the film team, and presuming I would have been wanted, I was perfectly content to be merely the inspirer of the series. This had the advantage of my being able to say to critics that I did not write the scripts or, to those who liked the series, to say thank you and blush modestly.

The Father Dowling and Sister Mary Teresa series were now established. From time to time, in order to get out of church, so to speak, I would write a self-standing mystery—*Frigor Mortis*, *Infra Dig*—but I also started a third series, the Andrew Broom mysteries, the protagonists of which were an uncle and his nephew, both lawyers in a smallish Indiana town. These mysteries did fairly well. In them I was out to exploit the switcheroo to a fare-thee-well. A "switcheroo" is the sudden reversal of the story so that what seems to have been happening is actually something quite different. At the outset my thought was to end each chapter with a switcheroo. Well, that would have been too much, and the series settled down into a nice comfortable niche.

Perhaps it was the economic spur that turned me into a professional writer and drove my nightly, dogged efforts in the basement of our house on Portage Avenue, learning to write publishable stories, but after I had gained my immediate objective and had us out of debt, I continued to write at what might seem a frantic pace. If I asked myself how many novels I have published, I could not answer—and I do not really want to know. Herman Melville's career, after knowing highs, went into decline, and he was all but forgotten when he wrote his late novella *Billy Budd*. In his portable writing desk there was found a motto: "Be true to the dreams of your youth." I like to think it sustained him as he wrote on in undeserved obscurity. Finally, that is what any writer does, return again and again to the original aspiration that came to him when young. It is the writing, producing a well-made story, that counts. All the rest is gravy. FT

I Was, Once More, Superman

in my dreams
last night, torching a section of steel plate loose
with X-ray vision, swigging like orange juice
a gallon of explosive oil. Such themes,
a half century past childhood!—So fast I blurred
invisible, so nimble I pirouetted
with atoms, so powerful my passage shredded
the air like thunder when I stopped or stirred.

And yes, I flew. Lifted my arms and flew.
Swooped and zoomed and shrank the world to a map.
Flying's the greatest happiness of sleep.

I woke to find myself still me, and you
still you of course, still angry from our fight,
and all this Earth a vale of kryptonite.

Jack Butler

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The Saints of John Paul II

Philip Zaleski

Of the making of saints there is no end cries the modern Ecclesiastes, and with some justification. A thousand years ago—or even twenty-five years ago—the roster of canonized saints was severely circumscribed. From 1000 A.D. to 1978 A.D., fewer than 450 men and women had been "raised to the altars" by the Catholic Church. The situation changed dramatically under the long pontificate of John Paul II. The vigorous pope—who was ordained on the Feast of All Saints—canonized, during his twenty-six-year reign, over 480 saints and beatified 1300 more, with a thousand additional candidates still wending their way through the labyrinthine juridical process. Some wag has christened this explosion of saints John Paul's "canonization cannon." Pope Benedict XVI has not yet canonized anyone, but there are good reasons for thinking that he intends to keep up the pace: not only his pronounced intention of sustaining the principles of John Paul's papacy, but his own declaration, when asked about his predecessor's penchant for saint-making, that "there cannot be too many saints."

This is, of course, sound Catholic teaching. We are all called to be saints, and the more the merrier. In his *Paradiso*, Dante depicts vast throngs of the elect encircling the Celestial Throne, but suggests (in the early fourteenth century) that only a few heavenly seats remain unfilled; others, more generous, imagine billions of saints or saints-in-the-making, in purgatory or heaven, with the number increasing without pause until the last trumpet sounds.

Whatever the true number of saints, now and to come, we can be sure that God wants to save as many of us as possible ("for He wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well-doing," as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* nicely puts it, quoting the Vatican II document, *Dei Verbum*). But why does the Church find it necessary or desirable to bring some of these saints so dramatically into public view? Why bother to canonize? The best contemporary discussion of the subject occurs in Hans Urs von Balthasar's 1954 book *Thérèse of Lisieux: The Story of a Mission*, in which the great Catholic theologian explains his views with characteristic rigor and, some might add, uncharacteristic simplicity. Balthasar's presentation is of particular interest because of his influence upon the writings of both John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Balthasar suggests that the entire structure of the Church, from the Petrine ministry to the humblest parish pastorate, exists for one purpose: the making of saints. "The ultimate reason for her whole institutional and objective side," he writes, is "the obligatory vocation to subjective and personal sanctity." Even Christ's personal sanctity serves the same end: "Christ had no other motive in 'sanctifying' himself than 'that they also might be sanctified through the truth' (John 17:19)."

We attain to this "subjective and personal" sanctity by fulfilling our role in the building of the kingdom, the mission that God has assigned to us from eternity. Since everyone has his or her own mission, it follows that no two saints are alike. This truth is affirmed by scripture ("Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit . . . who apportions to each one individually as he wills" [1 Corinthians 12:4-11]) and by such theologians and holy men as John Henry Newman ("God has committed some work to me which has not been committed to another. I have my mission—I may

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never know it in this life, but I shall be told of it in next," [*Meditations and Devotions*, 1893]).

Nonetheless, a rough classification of saints remains possible. Balthasar suggests two ways. In the first, saints are either "customary" or "representative" (this latter category is also called "special"). "Customary" saints achieve holiness through the ordinary, well-worn ways of the Church, modeling their sanctity on that of their forbears. "Representative" saints, by contrast, serve as models for others—sometimes against their own will, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus.

Balthasar's second schema, expanding on the first, emphasizes the importance of mission. All saints possess a mission, but some missions flow from the body of the Church to the head, others from the head to the body. The first variety usually arises among members of religious communities or orders and characterizes the great majority of saints, those largely unfamiliar names that populate the ecclesiastical calendar. The second kind of mission, "incomparably more distinctive," strikes "like lightning from heaven." The saints set aglow (or burnt to a crisp) by these missions become cornerstones of the Church, "prime numbers" that offer "a new type of conformity to Christ." Thérèse of Lisieux is the most striking modern example. Such saints may succeed, falter, or fail in carrying out their mission. They may embrace it or flee from its terrible burdens. Just once in all of history, in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, has a mission achieved such perfection that mission and person "become indistinguishable."

At one time, every young Catholic dreamed of becoming a saint, whether customary or representative, from the body or from the head. Teresa of Avila, in her sixteenth-century autobiography, recalls how she and her older brother Rodrigo played at being martyrs, while Thérèse of Lisieux, nearly three centuries later, wrote in her notebooks that "I wish to fulfill your will perfectly. . . . I desire to be a saint." When I was a child, busily memorizing the Baltimore Catechism, my parents and teachers brought steadily before my attention, through books, holy pictures, nightly prayers, movies (to this day, my mental image of Bernadette of Lourdes is the dark-eyed, pale-skinned beauty of Jennifer Jones), and the statues that lined the walls and populated the side chapels of our parish church, the presence—one is tempted to say omnipresence—of the saints. Even in the austere years following Vatican II, the Church encouraged its flock to meditate upon, venerate, beseech, and, if one were bold enough, emulate the saints, both "customary" and "representative," "ordinary" and "prime." Canonization, practiced by public acclaim (the *vox populi*) in the early Christian era and regularized by Pope Gregory IX in 1234 (a year whose ascending numbers suggested, when I first encountered them in the religious ardors of my high school years, the infinite progression of the Church Triumphant), has always been understood as a means to this end.

In traditional Christian thought, canonization serves a number of purposes: It glorifies God, whose grace sanctifies the saints, and it honors the saints, who reflect God's glory; it provides models of holiness for guidance and imitation as each of us struggles to identify and fulfill his own mission and thus find his own path to sanctity; and it tells us something of the citizenry of heaven, instructing us as to whom we may venerate and ask to intercede with God. The procedure serves a more practical aim as well: Its rigorous vetting (which makes media scrutiny of politicians seems child's play by comparison) filters out unworthy candidates. The process takes years, often centuries; investigations unfold on both diocesan and Vatican levels; hundreds of witnesses typically testify and mountains of documentation result; as a final hurdle, two miracles are required (except in the case of martyrs): one for beatification, another for canonization. The benefits of such screening abound. One need only look at Catholic churches that include in their stained glass windows "saints" that have not yet been and are scarcely likely to be canonized; in one parish church in Ohio the light that strikes the altar passes through an image of the notoriously promiscuous "Jungle Doctor" Thomas Dooley.

All these considerations played a part, one can safely assume, in John Paul II's many canonizations. His was an exuberant papacy, and exuberance in saint-making seems, in retrospect, to have been an intrinsic part of the package. The steady stream of canonizations from 1978 to 2004 did, I believe, increase enthusiasm for the saints, by bringing an array of new figures to our attention for veneration and intercessory prayer, some of whom captured the imagination and even love of Christians worldwide (Mother Teresa, who has been beatified but not yet canonized, is a choice example).

"Ordinary" canonizations necessarily outnumber "prime," but these nearly invisible ordinary saints can wield a vital, salutary role, especially on the local level. For example, John Paul beatified a priest, a nun, and a lawyer in minor orders, all from the tiny Mediterranean island of Malta. The event was scarcely noticed, no more than a blip on the calendar of Church activities, and yet these were the first Maltese ever to be raised—and thus of inestimable importance to the Maltese Catholics, who now have native sons and daughters to receive their prayers. In addition, as curia officials never tired of emphasizing, John Paul wished to

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bring attention to the holiness of certain groups largely ignored by the Church in the past, especially laymen and laywomen, whether married or single (nearly 250 of his canonizations were laypeople, including Puerto Rico's first saint, Carlos Manuel Rodríguez Santiago). Moreover, he canonized hundreds of martyrs, underscoring the terrible truth that the twentieth century was the bloodiest in Church history.

Few Catholics, or indeed those of any faith, fault such rationales for canonization (apart from the veneration of saints, which raises concerns among many Protestants), or disagree with John Paul's wish to bring martyrs, holy laity, and "prime number" saints to the world's attention. One might anticipate, therefore, that the repeated firing of John Paul's "canonization cannon" would have been music to most, if not all, Catholic ears.

But this was not the case. Objections have been legion. Not all can be taken seriously. The *New York Times* on October 15, 2004, ran an editorial protesting the beatification of Charles I of Austria, declaring him "a weak, dissembling loser" and ascribing the proposed action to "nostalgic monarchists" who presumably had the ear of the pope. It is difficult to fathom the *Times'* interest in this minor event, unless nostalgic anti-monarchists reside on its editorial board. American Atheists, Inc., chimed in with an Internet article castigating the pope's "sainthood factory" and dubbing him "the Mark McGwire of the Vatican's saint-making machine." In 2002, the Rev. Richard M. McBrien complained in *USA Today* about the speed, as he perceived it, of a few recent canonizations, declaring "What's the rush? If someone is really in heaven, we'll find out in time." This is true, of course, but such a wait-and-see attitude, if followed to its logical extreme, would lead to the end of all canonizations.

Other challenges cannot be dismissed so readily. Some of them focus on John Paul's penchant for naming saints; often these arguments boil down to "too much of a good thing." But such objections have been much less prevalent than one might suppose. The reason for this is simple enough: To bolster arguments against too many canonizations, opponents almost always wind up discussing specific cases that, in their opinion, should not have received Vatican approval. This is where the brunt of the anti-canonization arguments lie, and they not only fail to convince but share certain disturbing characteristics.

The five most controversial canonizations of John Paul's pontificate were:

• *Edith Stein*, also known by her religious name of Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (1891-1942), canonized October 11, 1998. Born a Jew, she was a philosopher and pupil of Edmund Husserl before converting to Catholicism at the age of thirty and becoming a Carmelite nun. Stein was arrested by the Nazis in Holland, as part of a nationwide sweep after the Dutch bishops publicly condemned anti-Semitism, and was executed at Auschwitz.

• *The Chinese martyrs*, canonized October 1, 2000. A group of 120 who died for the faith, consisting of 87 Chinese (83 of them laypeople) and 33 non-Chinese missionaries. The martyrdoms ranged from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, the bulk occurring during the anti-Western Boxer rebellion.

• *Padre Pio* (1887-1968), born Franceso Forgione, canonized June 16, 2002. A wildly popular Italian Capuchin priest and a stigmatic who reportedly demonstrated many other paranormal powers including bilocation, clairvoyance, and miraculous cures.

• *Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer* (1902-1975), canonized October 6, 2002. A Spanish priest who in 1928 founded Opus Dei, a personal prelature composed of laypeople and priests devoted to leading exemplary lives in their ordinary daily routines.

• *Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin* (1474-1548), canonized July 31, 2002. A Mexican Indian who experienced a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary dressed as an Aztec princess. This apparition is now celebrated as Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas. Associated with the event is a miraculous *tilma* or cloak, bearing a life-sized image of Mary.

Opposition to these canonizations was fierce. The case of the Chinese martyrs raised howls of outrage from the government in Beijing, which unleashed a barrage worthy of Mao's most apoplectic discharges and perhaps unprecedented in any previous canonization. The Vatican's action, Beijing thundered, "distorts and tramples on history, embellishes imperialism, is a calumny against the Chinese people, lovers of peace, wounds the Chinese's feelings, and insults their dignity." It might be worth mentioning that one of the martyrs, fourteen-year-old Anna Wang, was decapitated after singing "the door of heaven is open"; a nine-year-old boy and an infant were executed at the same time. Objections to Escrivá and Padre Pio, by contrast, for the most part focused on complaints about their behavior: Escrivá was accused of being ill-tempered, grasping, and abrupt with subordinates; Padre Pio of womanizing, faking his stigmata, and generally being a vulgar reactionary. Edith Stein's main impediment

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seems to have been that she was born a Jew: If the Nazis killed her for being Jewish rather than for being Catholic, then she could not have been a martyr for the faith. Juan Diego, like the Chinese martyrs, was suspected of being an imperialist dupe, if not a wholly imaginary creation of duplicitous Catholic colonialists.

These arguments prove to have little merit. There seem to be some shadowy areas in the deportment of both Escrivá and Padre Pio, but—how shall I put it?—not all saints are perfect saints. Jerome possessed an acid tongue, a hot temper, and a famed lack of charity; Mother Teresa could be overbearing; Ignatius was headstrong. No real evidence exists, however, that any of these men and women wallowed in mortal sin. Flaws of temperament are not incompatible with Christian perfection, which consists, according to Thomas Aquinas, "in charity, principally as to the love of God, secondarily as to the love of neighbor." Heroic virtue, rather than a serene disposition, is what we ask of saints.

Hagiophiles (a neologism, but a useful one) will forever enjoy rehashing the details of these debates. In the opposition voices one discerns a glaring irony. Anyone familiar with the ideological currents within the Catholic Church will realize the five controversial canonizations involve saints who represent the mainstream of contemporary Catholicism—that body of thought most clearly expressed in *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II's dogmatic constitution of the Church. John Paul II enthusiastically endorsed all five canonizations, and the elected saints show the mix of innovation and traditionalism that characterized his pontificate. Similarly, it is apparent that most of the protests arose in the so-called "liberal" or "left" sectors of the Catholic Church (one must bear in mind that these labels, applied to Catholic thought, can diverge sharply from their secular counterparts). Behind—or to be charitable, alongside—worries about Escrivá's temper or Juan Diego's reality lay political concerns, as proponents of a decentralized, progressive Church sought to block the elevation of candidates perceived to be representatives of a traditional, outmoded Catholicism.

And yet here, as so often in the history of the saints, the truth confounds all expectations. The liberal opposition seems caught in entrenched views of ethnic, religious, and cultural identity. Consider the case of Edith Stein. Is it true that a Jew cannot be a Catholic, that conversion is a violation of Jewish identity? This is a delicate and contentious subject, but the fact remains that many Jews have converted to Christianity and yet consider themselves still Jewish; they see Christianity as a culmination, rather than a violation, of their Jewishness.

The attack on Juan Diego as an imperialist dupe carries a similar message: that a real Indian cannot become a Catholic, that to do so would be to violate his Indian identity (the same argument, one notes, has been applied to the conversion of the great Sioux Indian and Catholic visionary, Nicholas Black Elk). Beijing's complaints against the Chinese martyrs stem in part from a different sort of inflexibility, which we can justly term cultural xenophobia. And one senses in the objections to Padre Pio yet another form of cultural bigotry, manifested in a discomfort with peasant manners.

At the same time, the liberal opposition is, ironically, undercutting efforts to enhance the role of laity in the Church. Juan Diego was perhaps the most important layman in Mexican ecclesiastical history; Escrivá, as much as anyone in the twentieth century, worked to establish a model of lay Catholic holiness. The Church desperately needs an effective, sophisticated program of lay spirituality (something beyond the pablum offered in many or most RCIA programs); Opus Dei may not be the best solution, but it is an important first step.

Opposition to the canonizations arose largely from the elite rather than the masses. Indeed, it often came from non-Catholic sources. Who can doubt that the voice of the faithful spoke with irrefutable vigor and clarity in the canonizations of Padre Pio and Juan Diego? Up to ten million people lined the streets of Mexico City following Juan Diego's canonization, and half a million attended Padre Pio's canonization in St. Peter's Square. All who favor letting the Catholic faithful speak must be gladdened by these canonizations.

One notable aspect of the opposition was an apparent fear of Balthasarian "prime numbers": saints that offer new models of sanctity or at least new avenues in the history of spirituality. Escrivá pioneered a new understanding of lay holiness; Stein offered a example of courage and hope for the not-inconsiderable number of Catholic Jews; Juan Diego initiated the great compound of holiness, devotion, public spectacle, and private sacrifice that characterizes so much of Latin American Catholicism.

John Paul's canonizations subvert suppositions about his supposedly "conservative" pontificate. These saints were radical manifestations of holiness in the heart of the Church. Perhaps one more observation needs to be made, for those Catholics who would continue, in the face of so many blessings, to oppose these canonizations: In the eyes of the Church, all canonizations are infallible. They fall under the rubric of dogmatic facts that have been definitively proposed and require the assent of all believers. Does this mean that opposition to proposed canonizations should be

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squelched? Far from it. To some extent, resistance plays the role once occupied by the Devil's Advocate (a juridical figure whose sole job was to dredge up anything that might block a canonization). Protest, at the appropriate time, remains an invaluable service to the Church.

What of the future? No reason has emerged so far to think that the outpouring of canonizations will dwindle during the pontificate of Benedict XVI. One of his first acts as pontiff was to advance the beatification of John Paul II, a prime number par excellence. One suspects that in time John Paul himself will be declared not only a saint but a doctor of the Church, the third pope (after Gregory the Great and Leo the Great) so honored.

In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul II writes—specifically of twentieth-century martyrs, but alluding in a more general way to all saints—that "they have become the foundation of a new world, a new Europe, and a new civilization." This sense of the new has arisen already in the Church itself, through the fresh wind of John Paul's pontificate that initiated or encouraged original forms of ecclesial activity—from World Youth Days to lay movements like Focolare and Communion and Liberation—and that gave us his canonization cannon.

These canonizations marked a definitive reversal of the post-Vatican II "stripping of the altars": the invasion of secular ideology into Catholic life, manifested in a variety of ways, from the homiletic downplaying of sin to the banishing of saints' statues from parish churches. To canonize is to renew the bond between heaven and earth; every canonization, in a sense, reconsecrates the world.

But how to bring to the world this spirit of newness, revitalization, and hope? Political action matters a great deal, but work must also take place, as John Paul consistently emphasized, on the personal level, by encouraging holiness among the faithful. Only by attacking the problem on the most fundamental levels—those of the person and the family—will a culture hypnotized by self-love give way to one built upon love for God and neighbor. Here the saints point the way; indeed, only the saints can point the way.

We should never underestimate the power of holiness. I've spent much of the past two decades working shoulder-to-shoulder with wavering Christians; with ex-Christians who have turned to yoga, Buddhism, the New Age, or other forms of spirituality; and with hard-nosed nonbelievers. Most of these people cold-shoulder ecclesiastical structures, but they all embrace the saints. They *love* the saints. The saints appeal to everyone, for they show us life as it could and should be. It may be that the thirst for holiness is embedded in every human being, as an extension of the universal longing for God. Why not slake this thirst? We can do no better, if we wish to advance John Paul's, and now Benedict's, vision of a "new civilization," than to give the world our saints, with joy, and in abundance. FT

Terminus

Behind the corner, over that far hill
Where the last train pulls into the last station
And steam expires into the gold dusk chill—
That's Peace Of Mind, the final destination.

And somewhere up ahead, the traveler,
Who now must haul his bag up on his shoulder,
Knows there's a place nearby where old friends are,
Friends who are never getting any older:

Some kind of cottage with a southwest view,
A kitchen-garden, as the mail insisted,
Grape-arbor, and an outdoor barbecue.
Who might have thought that such a place existed?

Halfway he stops and looks back with a sigh.
A plume of smoke still towers in the sky.

Frederick Turner

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The Founding of Nations

Wilfred M. McClay

Did the United States really have a beginning that can be called its "Founding"? Can any society, for that matter, be said to have a founding moment in its past that ought to be regarded as a source of guidance and support?

Much of the intellectual culture of our time stands resolutely opposed to the idea of a founding as a unique moment in secular time that has a certain magisterial authority over what comes after it. The cult of ancestors, in its many forms, is always one of the chief objects of modernity's deconstructive energies. Kant's famous command, *Sapere Aude*—"Dare to Reason," the battle cry of the Enlightenment—always ends up being deployed against arguments claiming traditional authority.

Foundings, in this view, are fairy tales that cannot be taken seriously—indeed, that it is dangerous to take seriously, since modern nation-states have used them as tools of cultural hegemony. One has a moral obligation to peek behind the curtain, and one ought to have a strong presupposition about what one will find there. There is a settled assumption in the West, particularly among the educated, that every founding was in reality a blood-soaked moment, involving the enslavement or exploitation of some for the benefit of others. Foundational myths are merely attempts to prettify this horror. Our ancestors were not the noble heroes of epic. They were the primal horde or the Oedipal usurpers, and their authority derived ultimately from their successful monopolization of violence—and then their subsequent monopolization of the way the story would be told.

The perfect expression of this view is Theodor Adorno's dictum, "There is no monument of civilization that is not at the same time a monument of barbarism." Every achievement of culture involves an elaborate concealment of the less-than-licit means that went into its making. Property is theft, in Proudhon's famous phrase, which means that legitimacy is nothing more than the preeminent force, and our systems of law are the ways that the stolen money is laundered and turned into Carnegie libraries and Vanderbilt universities and other carved Corinthian pillars of society. From this point of view, the credulous souls who speak of the American founding are merely trying to retail a heroic myth about the Founding Fathers, a group of youthful and idealistic patriarchs who somehow reached up into the heavens and pulled down a Constitution for all time.

Admittedly, American filiopietism about the Founding can get out of hand. On the ceiling of the rotunda of the United States Capitol building—the inside of the dome which, in its external aspect, is arguably the single most recognizable symbol of American democracy—there is painted a fresco called "The Apotheosis of George Washington." It is as if the Sistine Chapel were transposed into an American key. The first president sits in glory, flanked by the Goddess of Liberty and the winged figure Fame sounding a victorious trumpet and holding aloft a palm frond. The thirteen female figures in a semi-circle around Wash-

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ington represent the thirteen original states. On the outer ring stand six allegorical groups representing classical images of agriculture, arts and sciences, commerce, war, mechanics, and seafaring. This figure of a deified Washington, painted significantly enough in the year 1865, reflects a vision that appealed powerfully to the American public. But it is actually a rather disturbing image, and it cries out for debunking.

Still, debunking is a blunt instrument of limited value, despite the modern prejudice in its favor. To the question "What is a man?" André Malraux once gave the quintessential modern debunking answer: "A miserable little pile of secrets." That answer is too true to dismiss—but not quite true enough to embrace. And it is, in its way, the exact opposite number to the saccharin image of a deified and perfected George Washington dwelling in the clouds atop the Capitol dome. Such a conflict between grand moral oversimplications impoverishes our thinking and sets us a false standard of greatness—one that is too easily debunked and leaves us too easily defrauded.

As before in our history, our current challenges have forced us to think more deeply and clearly about who and what we are. And it is not entirely a bad thing that we find ourselves at this juncture. Periods of crisis or decline are inevitable even in the healthiest society, precisely because what is good in the past can never be passed along mechanically and effortlessly from one generation to the next. Each generation has to rediscover those things for itself. Human nature being what it is—and human society being, in some sense, the amplification of human nature—it usually takes a crisis to cause individuals or nations to renew themselves.

These things are not covered under any program of regular maintenance. They are not the product of smooth, steady-state development overseen by planners and bureaucrats. Renewal of a culture is a more jagged and lurching thing. Sometimes it takes a fight for survival to induce it. Arnold Toynbee was right in seeing the dynamic of challenge-and-response as the chief source of a civilization's greatness. And he was also right to assert that great civilizations die from suicide rather than murder—which is to say that they die when they lack the will to respond vigorously and creatively to the very challenges that would otherwise make them stronger.

To affirm the significance of a founding as an ongoing guide to and presence in the life of the thing it founded is to challenge the idea that the development of a nation should be understood instead as a process of slow accretion and organic adaptation. When we speak of foundings, we substitute an architectural and engineering metaphor of foundations for a biological metaphor of evolution. We insist on the need for that home base as a point of reference in self-conscious and self-governing human affairs. We give serious weight to anterior acts of the will—promises, resolutions, covenants, laws—which are meant to express binding principles and dispositions that rise above the considerations of the moment.

When we speak of American national identity, one of the chief points at issue arises out of the tension between *creed* and *culture*. This is a tension between, on the one hand, the idea of the United States as a nation built on the foundation of self-evident, rational, and universally applicable propositions about human nature and human society; and, on the other hand, the idea of the United States as a very unusual, historically specific and contingent entity, underwritten by a long, intricately evolved, and very particular legacy of English law, language, and customs, Greco-Roman cultural antecedents, and Judeo-Christian sacred texts and theological and moral teachings, without whose presences the nation's flourishing would not be possible.

All this makes a profound tension, with much to be said for both sides. And the side one comes down on will say a lot about one's stance on an immense number of issues, such as immigration, education, citizenship, cultural assimilation, multiculturalism, pluralism, the role of religion in public life, the prospects for democratizing the Middle East, and on and on.

Yet any understanding of American identity that entirely excluded either creed or culture would be seriously deficient. Any view of American life that failed to acknowledge its powerful strains of universalism, idealism, and crusading zeal would be describing a different country from the America that happens to exist. And any view of America as simply a bundle of abstract normative ideas about freedom and democracy and self-government that can flourish just as easily in any cultural and historical soil, including a multilingual, post-religious, or post-national one, takes too much for granted and will be in for a rude awakening.

The antagonism of creed and culture is better understood not as a statement of alternatives but as an antinomy, one of those perpetual oppositions that can never be resolved. In fact, the two halves of the opposition often reinforce each other. The creed needs the support of the culture—and the culture, in turn, is imbued with respect for the creed. For the creed to be successful, it must be able to presume the presence of all kinds of cultural inducements—toward civility, restraint, deferred gratification, nonviolence, loyalty, procedural fairness, impersonal neutrality, compassion, respect for elders, and the like.

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These traits are not magically called into being by the mere invocation of the Declaration of Independence. Nor are they sustainable for long without the support of strong and deeply rooted social and cultural institutions that are devoted to the formation of character, most notably the traditional family and traditional religious institutions. But by the same token, the American culture is unimaginable apart from the influence of the American creed: from the sense of pride and moral responsibility Americans derive from being, as Walter Berns has argued, a carrier of universal values—a vanguard people.

Forcing a choice between creed and culture is not the way to resolve the problem of cultural restoration. Clearly both can plausibly claim a place in the American Founding. What seems more urgent is the repair of some background assumptions about our relation to the past. It is a natural enough impulse to look back in times of turbulence and uncertainty. And it is especially natural, even obligatory, for a republican form of government to do so, since republics come into being at particular moments in secular time, through self-conscious acts of public deliberation. Indeed, philosophers from Aristotle on have insisted that republics *must* periodically recur to their first principles, in order to adjust and renew themselves through a fresh encounter with their initiating vision.

A constitutional republic like the United States is uniquely grounded in its foundational moment, its time of creation. And a founding is not merely the instant that the ball started rolling. Instead, it is a moment that presumes a certain authority over all the moments that will follow—and to speak of a founding is to presume that such moments in time are possible. It most closely resembles the moment that one takes an oath or makes a promise. One could even say that a constitutional founding is a kind of covenant, a meta-promise entered into with the understanding that it has a uniquely powerful claim on the future. It requires of us a willingness to be constantly looking back to our initiating promises and goals, in much the same way that we would chart progress or regress in our individual lives by reference to a master list of resolutions.

Republicanism means self-government, and so republican liberty does not mean living without restraint. It means, rather, living in accordance with a law that you have dictated to yourself. Hence the especially strong need of republics to recur to their founding principles and their founding narratives, in a never-ending process of self-adjustment. There should be a constant interplay between founding ideals and current realities, a tennis ball bouncing back and forth between the two.

And for that to happen, there need to be two things in place. First, founding principles must be sufficiently fixed to give us genuine guidance, to *teach* us something. Of course, we celebrate the fact that our Constitution was created with a built-in openness to amendment. But the fact that such ideals are open to amendment is perhaps the least valuable thing about them. A founding, like a promise or a vow, means nothing if its chief glory is its adaptability. The analogy of a successful marriage, which is also, in a sense, a *res publica* that must periodically recur to first principles, and whose flourishing depends upon the ability to distinguish first principles from passing circumstances, is actually a fairly good guide to these things.

Second, there needs to be a sense of connection to the past, a reflex for looking backward, and cultivating that ought to be one of the chief uses of the formal study of history. Unfortunately, the fostering of a vital sense of connection to the past is not one of the goals of historical study as it is now taught and practiced in this country. The meticulous contextualization of past events and ideas, arising out of a sophisticated understanding of the past's particularities and discontinuities with the present, is one of the great achievements of modern historiography. But we need to recognize that this achievement comes at a high cost when it emphasizes the *pastness* of the past—when it makes the past completely unavailable to us, separated from us by an impassable chasm of contextual difference.

In the case of the American Founding, a century-long assault has taken place among historians, and the sense of connection is even more tenuous. The standard scholarly accounts insist this heated series of eighteenth-century debates—among flawed, unheroic, and self-interested white men—offers nothing to which we should grant any abiding authority. That was then, and this is now.

The insistence on the pastness of the past imprisons us in the present. It makes our present antiseptically cut off from anything that might really nourish, surprise, or challenge it. It erodes our sense of being part of a common enterprise with humankind. An emphasis on scholarly precision has dovetailed effortlessly with what might be called the debunking imperative, which generally aims to discredit any use of the past to justify or support something in the present, and is therefore one of the few gestures likely to win universal approbation among historians. It is professionally safest to be a critic and extremely dangerous to be too affirmative.

Scholarly responsibility thus seems to demand the deconstruction of the American Founding into its constituent elements, thereby divesting it of any claim to unity or any heroic or mythic dimensions, deserving of

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our admiration or reverence. There was no coherence to what they did, and looking backward to divine what they meant by what they were doing makes no sense. The Founders and Framers, after all, fought among themselves. They produced a document that was a compromise, that waffled on important issues, that remains hopelessly bound to the eighteenth century and inadequate to our contemporary problems, etc. And so—in much the same manner as the source criticism of the Bible, which challenges the authority of Scripture by understanding the text as a compilation of haphazardly generated redactions—the Constitution is seen as a concatenation of disparate elements, a mere political deal meant to be superseded by other political deals, and withal an instrument of the powerful. The last thing in the world you would want to do is treat it as a document with any intrinsic moral authority. Every text is merely a pretext. This is the kind of explanation one has learned to expect from the historical guild.

In this connection, it is amusing to see the extent to which historians, who are pleased to regard the Constitution as a hopelessly outdated relic of a bygone era, are themselves still crude nineteenth-century positivists at heart. They still pride themselves on their ability to puncture myths, relying on a shallow positivistic understanding of a myth as a more or less organized form of falsehood, rather than seeing myth as a structure of meaning, a manner of giving a manageable shape to the cosmos, and to one's own experience of the world, a shape that expresses cultural ideals and shared sentiments, and that guides us through the darkness of life's many perils and unanswerable questions by providing us with what Plato called a "likely story."

To be sure, there are good things to be said of a critical approach to history, and there are myths aplenty that richly deserve to be punctured. I am glad, for example, that we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Washington, D.C., in the Kennedy years had very little in common with the legendary Camelot, aside from the ubiquity of adulterous liaisons in both places. That kind of ground-clearing is important, and we are better off without that kind of propagandistic myth. We might even be better off without the Apotheosis of George Washington sitting atop the Capitol dome.

But ground-clearing by itself is not enough. And to think otherwise is to mistake an ancillary activity for the main thing itself—as if agriculture were nothing more than the application of insecticides and weed-killers. History as debunking is ultimately an empty and fruitless undertaking, which fails to address the reasons we humans try to narrate and understand our pasts. It fails to take into account the ways in which a nation's morale, cohesion, and strength derive from a sense of connection to its past. And it fails to acknowledge how much a healthy sense of the future—including the economic and cultural preconditions for a critical historiography to ply its trade—depends on a mythic sense of the nation. The human need to encompass life within the framework of myth is not merely a longing for pleasing illusion. Myths reflect a fundamental human need for a larger shape to our collective aspirations. And it is an illusion to think that we can so ignore that need, and so cauterize our souls, that we will never again be troubled by it.

Indeed, the debunking imperative operates on the basis of its own myth. It presumes the existence of a solid and orderly substratum, a rock-solid reality lying just beneath the illusory surfaces, waiting to be revealed in all its direct and unfeigned honesty when the facades and artifices and false divisions are all stripped away. There is a remarkable complacency and naiveté about such a view. The near-universal presumption that the demise of the nation-state and the rise of international governance would be very good things has everything, except a shred of evidence, to support it. And as for the debunking of bourgeois morality that still passes for sophistication in some quarters and has been the stock-in-trade of Western intellectuals for almost two centuries now—well, this has always been a form of moral free-riding, like the radical posturing of adolescents who always know they can call Mom when they get into trouble.

One residue of the debunking heritage is the curious assumption that narratives of foundings are mere fairy tales—prettified, antiseptic flights of fancy, or wish-fulfillment fantasies, telling of superlative heroes and maidens acting nobly and virtuously to bring forth the status quo or its antecedents. I think it's fair to say that foundational narratives, including creation myths, tend to be conservative in character, in the sense that they tend to provide historical and moral support for existing regimes and social arrangements. It's hard to imagine them being any other way. But the part about their being prettifying fairy tales is demonstrably wrong. In fact, one could say that the most amazing feature of the great foundational myths is their moral complexity.

One need not even consider the appalling creation myths of Greek antiquity, such as the story of Kronos, who castrated his father Ouranos with a sickle given him by his mother, and then, in order to protect himself against the same dismal fate, swallowed his own children until his youngest child, Zeus, also aided by his mother, was able to overthrow him and assume prima-

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cy among the gods.

Consider instead the great Biblical stories of the Pentateuch, foundational texts not only for the Jewish people but for the entire family of monotheistic Abrahamic religious faiths—which is to say, those faiths that have been most constitutive of Western civilization. These Biblical texts are anything but tracts of unrelieved patriotism. In fact, one would be justified in seeing them as an exercise in collective self-humiliation. They are replete with the disreputable deeds of their imperfect and dissembling patriarchs, who pawn off their wives as sisters, deceive their fathers, cheat their brothers, murder, and commit incest—together with tales of an incorrigibly feckless people, the people of Israel, sheep-like fools who manage to forget every theophany and divine favor shown them, and prove unable and unwilling to follow the law that has been given to them.

The narrative does not blink at those things. It is itself the harshest critic of the things it describes, and every one of its human heroes is presented as deeply flawed. But what holds all this together is not the greatness of the heroes but the enduring quality of God's successive covenants with them and with His people. The God of the Hebrew Bible makes promises and keeps them, operating through covenants and laws that superintend and take precedence over the force of passing events. In that sense, the complexity of the Biblical account registers, in a remarkably accurate way, the same set of moral directives regarding the authority of the past—and the elements of pain and suffering and shame in that past—that goes into the making of any durable founding. The Passover seder, which is also the template for the Christian gospel story, is not a story of heroic triumph but of deliverance from slavery by a promise-keeping Deity.

Just as rich for our contemplation are the Roman founding myths: both the ancient tale of Romulus and Remus as the founders of Rome, and then the later effort, in Virgil's *Aeneid*, to combine that story with the greatest story of antiquity, at the very hinge of the heroic age: the Trojan War. The story of Romulus and Remus is particularly gruesome. Sons of Mars, they were abandoned as infants in or near the river Tiber by a king who had usurped their maternal grandfather, who feared they might overthrow him. But they survived and were famously nursed by a she-wolf, a beast sacred to Mars, and then raised by a shepherd. They eventually killed the king, and went ahead with the building of their own city, on the very spot where the she-wolf had found them. But then a petty quarrel led Romulus to kill his brother in a fit of anger, after which he promptly named the city Roma, after himself. Its first settlers were outlaws and thieves, whom Romulus had invited in. Then, to supply the women needed to populate the place, he lured the nearby Sabine tribe to a festival and, while distracting the men, sent his own men to make off with the Sabine women.

If the purpose of a founding myth is to show the founders in the best possible light, what is one to make of this tawdry tale? And what is one to make of its persistence? Even Virgil's *Aeneid*, which was composed during the reign of Augustus as a consciously wrought foundational myth for imperial Rome, did not seek to overturn the story of Romulus as the founder of the city of Rome. Virgil made the Trojan Aeneas into the founder of the Roman *people*, giving Rome a direct linkage to the greatest events of antiquity, while frankly imitating the form and content of both of the great Greek epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in his own epic. But he did so in a way that conjoined the homegrown story with the Greek import, continuing to recognize Romulus as the founder of the city and the descendant of Aeneas.

It might be added that even the *Aeneid*, composed under the watchful gaze of Augustus, who had his own interest in reforming Roman culture and encouraging the return of the old republican mores, did not present its heroes in an unambiguously favorable light. The story of Aeneas's affair with, and parting from, the Carthaginian queen Dido in Book IV does not reflect particularly well on him. The animal-like pitilessness of his *furor* at the end of the poem, surely meant to recall the similar pitilessness of Achilles in the *Iliad*, may reflect the prowess of a great warrior, but not necessarily the *pietas* that is otherwise presented as Aeneas's most admirable asset. And then there is the mystery of why, when Aeneas returns from his visit to the underworld, he is said to have passed out through the gate of false dreams. Is this a subtle critique, right under Augustus' nose, of the whole enterprise of imperial Rome, the future of which Aeneas has been permitted to glimpse?

In any case, there is nothing simple or childlike about the myths of Rome. Perhaps what they collectively serve to illustrate is what has been called "the cost of Rome," the enormous price to be paid, in countless lives lost and maimed, in the disruption of settled ways, and in the immense sacrifice of personal desires and aspirations, for the sake of the public enterprise of founding and securing this city of destiny. But even that lesson is not presented in a pat way, but rather as one that enjoins painful memory and even flirts with the prospect that the suffering involved has been disproportionate. But above all else, the epic embodies an act of profound remembrance, which may be all the

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more powerful even if the events it remembers have not verifiably occurred.

Perhaps the most interesting question about these foundational stories is why they are so complex. And the answer is surely to be found in the complexity of the mythic dimension itself, the ways in which it can register and mirror and instruct a civilization, precisely by virtue of its being a rich and truthful narrative that is widely shared. This quality can be neglected in an overly politicized or rationalized age, which wants to see the play of tangible and measurable material interests or causes always at the bottom of things. And it certainly eludes a culture that has ceased to understand the human necessity of looking backward.

Human knowledge about human affairs always has a reflexive quality about it. It is never a matter of the tree falling unheard and unwitnessed in the forest. There is always someone listening and watching, always a feedback effect—and most prophecies tend to be either self-fulfilled or self-averted. The best social scientists understand this perfectly well (after all, they were the ones who gave us the term "self-fulfilling prophecy"), but they give us such knowledge in a vocabulary and form that are often all but self-subverting. Who, after all, wants to embrace a myth while *calling* it a myth?

But to do so may be preferable to the alternative of nineteenth-century positivism, so long as we are able to proceed with a capacious understanding of "myth," as something more than a mere tall tale, something that can be both life-giving and true. In this connection, there may be particular value in revisiting Ernest Renan's celebrated 1882 essay "What is a Nation?", a rich evocation of the nation's mythic dimension. For Renan, a nation was fundamentally "a soul, a spiritual principle," constituted not only by "present-day consent" but also by the residuum of the past, "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories" which form in the citizen "the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form." He declared:

> The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present, to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more—these are the essential conditions for being a people. . . . A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future.

Renan strongly opposed the then-fashionable view that nations should be understood as entities united by racial or linguistic or geographical or religious or material factors. None of those factors were sufficient to account for the emergence of this "spiritual principle." Active consent had to be a part of it. But it was insufficient without the presence of the past—the past in which that consent was embedded and through which it found meaning.

The ballast of the past, and our intimate connection to it, is similarly indispensable to the sense of American national identity. It forms a strain in our identity that is in some respects far less articulate (and less frequently articulated) than the universalistic principles that some writers have emphasized, precisely because it seems to conflict with American assertions of universalism, and its intellectual basis is less well-defined. But it is every bit as powerful, if not more so, and just as indispensable. And it is a very *particular* force. Our nation's particular triumphs, sacrifices, and sufferings—and our memories of those things—draw and hold us together, precisely because they are the sacrifices and sufferings, not of all humanity, but of us in particular.

No one has spoken of American national identity with greater mastery than Abraham Lincoln. In his 1838 speech on "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions," delivered to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln responded to the then-raging violence directed at blacks and abolitionists in Southern and border states with an admonition that could have come from Toynbee: "If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time, or die by suicide." The danger he most feared was that rampant lawlessness would dissolve the "attachment of the People" to their government. And the answer he provides to this danger is remarkable for the way it touches on the same themes that Renan recounts:

> Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution, never to violate in the least particular, the laws of the country; and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of seventy-six did to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and Laws, let every American pledge his life, his property, and his sacred honor;—let every man remember that to violate the law, is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the character of his own, and his children's liberty. Let reverence

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> for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap—let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges;—let it be written in Primmers, spelling books, and in Almanacs;—let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars.

The excerpt shows Lincoln's remarkable ability to intertwine the past and the present, and evoke a sense of connection between them. The speech performs the classic republican move, back to the founding origins, connecting the public order explicitly with something so primal as a son's love of, and respect for, his father. Obedience to the law and reverence for the Constitution—these are directly connected with memory, the reverence owed to the sufferings of the patriot generation, and the blood of one's own father. Such words gesture toward his even more famous invocation of "the mystic chords of memory" in his First Inaugural Address, chords "stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land," chords that provide the music of the Union. He performs a similar move of memorial linkage in the Gettysburg Address, beginning with the Founding Fathers and ending with a rededication and recommitment, drawn from knowledge of the "honored dead" who hallowed the ground with their sacrifice.

It is pointless to ask whether such a vision of the Union reflects an "objective" reality. The mythic reality on which such rhetoric depends, and which it helps to create and sustain, is powerful in its own right, too compelling to be dismissed or deconstructed into the language of "state formation" or "cultural hegemony." You could say that the antiseptic scholarly language offers insights that Lincoln cannot give us, and you would be right. But you could also say that Lincoln's reverent and hortatory language offers insights that the antiseptic scholars cannot provide, and you would be equally right. The real question is which language tells us more, and for what purposes.

A belief in the particularly instructive and sustaining qualities of the American Founding does not depend on a belief in the moral perfection of the Founders themselves, or the presumption that they were completely pure and disinterested regarding the measures they sought, or that they were invariably wise or prudent or far-sighted, or that they agreed in all important things, or that the Constitution they created is perfect in every way. As the examples of the Jewish and Roman foundational stories indicate, the stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves, in order to remember who we are, should not neglect to tell us the ways we have fallen short and the ways we have suffered, both needfully and needlessly, by necessity or by chance.

We should not try to edit out those stories' strange moral complexity, because it is there for a reason. Indeed, it is precisely our encounter with the surprise of their strangeness that reminds us of how much we have yet to learn from them. PT

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Books in Review

The Decent Drapery of Life

The Moral Imagination: From Edmund Burke to Lionel Trilling
by Gertrude Himmelfarb
Ivan R. Dee, 288 pages, $26

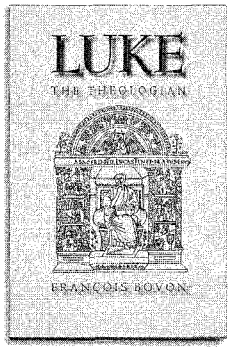
Reviewed by Joseph Bottum

In the French Revolution's "empire of light and reason," Edmund Burke observed, "all the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the super-added ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies" are to be discarded and lost to future generations.

The idea of a "moral imagination" is compelling at first hearing, but also slightly odd, if one thinks about it for a moment. Burke lived at the moment of transition for the imagination—a moment of transition for much else, of course, as the French Revolution rolled like a tumbrel through the Terror and on toward Napoleon. But the fortunes of the word "imagination" form a small but helpful figure, a tiny synechdoche, for those changes. When the medieval schoolmen used the word, they meant the general power of *image-reading*: the shared human capacity to look at the world and render it as images in the mind. And when the Romantics used the word, they meant the specific power of *image-making*: the artist's unique skill at forming an image in the mind and forcing it out on the world. For the old philosophers, the imagination was the ability to read the book of God's creation. For the new artists, the imagination was the ability to become like gods and write the book themselves.

In neither case, however, does the word "moral" go easily with the

Joseph Bottum *is editor of* First Things.



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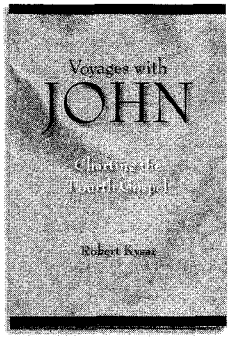

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word "imagination." As well speak of moral eye sockets and moral ear drums, for the medievals. As well speak of moral thunder and moral hurricanes, for the Romantics. But Burke meant something else by the word—or, rather, something that played with both sides of the changing meaning and arrived at a new usage: the imagination as a capacity that reads our feelings, judges them with an intelligence accustomed to considering actions in moral terms, and sees the result in social forms that provide "the decent drapery of life."

Gertrude Himmelfarb, our finest living historian of the nineteenth century, has adopted the phrase many times, most recently as the title of her new collection of essays, *The Moral Imagination: From Edmund Burke to Lionel Trilling*. And to read her as she examines such figures as Jane Austen and Benjamin Disraeli—or Ronald Knox and Winston Churchill, or Walter Bagehot and John Buchan—is to sense why we might need to cultivate some faculty that can describe in moral terms the social intersection of emotions and ideas.

Himmelfarb is right that the Victorians might be the best place for a historian to apply the moral imagination, for they may have been the most energetic, adventurous people who ever lived, and their virtues and their vices are written in gigantic letters. Not that you'd know it from the usual ways the nineteenth century was described throughout the twentieth century. Some years ago, I noticed that the copy of Himmelfarb's 1968 collection *Victorian Minds* in the library at Johns Hopkins had a running set of remarks scribbled in it—beginning on the first page, where someone had circled the title and noted, "Awful big book for such a small topic."

I was tempted to add "Lytton Strachey lives!" to the annotations, for the Edwardians' dismissal of the Victorian mind played a key part in making plausible their attack on Victorian manners and Victorian morals. Anything was floss for their mill: The great evidence for the hoary charge of universal hypocrisy in the Victorian age, for instance, is all the nineteenth-century novels that describe it. In truth, a more plausible reading of those novels would reveal that never was there a society more concerned about hypocrisy, more certain of its sinfulness, and more determined to expose it. A pre-Victorian like Jane Austen is wry about hypocrisy—and even a little appreciative of it, if the alternative is brazenness. By the time we reach Charles Dickens half a century later, hypocrites are the supreme villains: "I am very 'umble to the present moment, Master Copperfield," as Uriah Heep gloats, "but now I've got a little power!"

If Lytton Strachey's cool, languorous mockery in his 1918 *Eminent Victorians* set the tone for the aesthetic rejection of the Victorians, Lenin's shrill 1917 *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* set the tone for the economic attack. And from yet another angle came the Freudians' description of a culture sick to its root with bad ideas about sex (as though the entire nineteenth century was obsessed with wrapping piano legs in pantaloons, lest someone be led by their bare limbs to think about fornication) and bad ideas about death (as though every Victorian wanted to marshal a parade of child mourners to blacken the street with elaborate funerals).

Like three blades in a meat-grinder, the combination of Bloomsbury aesthetics, Marxist economics, and psychotherapeutic theory chewed the Victorians to pulp in volume after volume of twentieth-century social criticism. And against all this unfairness, this parent-slaying masquerading as historical scholarship, we've had, essentially, one woman: Gertrude Himmelfarb.

Lionel Trilling helped, of course; we forget how peculiar it seemed for a rising young literary critic in 1939 to publish a book like Trilling's *Matthew Arnold*, and Trilling is not only the subject of one of Himmelfarb's best essays in *The Moral Imagination*, but the presence who looms over the entire book. Then there was the rediscovery of Dickens by the magisterial critics of the 1940s and 1950s, from Edmund Wilson to George Orwell and F.R. Leavis. And the American feminists of the 1970s and 1980s, with their determination

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to feminize everything, were at least responsible for the republication of forgotten works from Hannah More's 1809 *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* to Olive Schreinder's 1883 *Story of an African Farm*—even if the books didn't always say exactly what the modern feminists wanted them to say. In *The Victorian Age in Literature*, G.K. Chesterton, thinking of such small but perfect domestic novels as Mrs. Gaskell's 1853 *Cranford*, remarks that the Victorian lady novelists were digging a canal that might have reached the sea, if only they had been left alone to dig it.

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Still, for the last fifty years, Gertrude Himmelfarb, in elegant essay after elegant essay, has been the primary force compelling us to reconsider such figures as Lord Acton, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, Thomas Malthus, Matthew Arnold, and scores of others, extending back through the eighteenth century in books like *The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments* and forward through the twentieth in books like *One Nation, Two Cultures: A Searching Examination of American Society in the Aftermath of Our Cultural Revolution.*

With such things as her review of Phyllis Rose's peculiar 1983 *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages*—reprinted in Himmelfarb's *Marriage and Morals Among the Victorians*—she rejected unhistorical attempts to steal from the past little nuggets of useful history for modern fights. And with such things as her essay "Where Have All the Footnotes Gone?"—a paean to Kate Turabian's stern copy-editing, reprinted in Himmelfarb's *On Looking into the Abyss*—she rejected unprofessional attempts to lighten the burden of the historian by various populist gestures and post-modern shrugs about the ultimate unknowability of things.

Now, in *The Moral Imagination*, she collects a dozen of her essays on key writers: some old, like her 1960 analysis of John Buchan, and some new, like her 2005 reminiscence of Lionel Trilling. I once accused Gertrude Himmelfarb of preferring second-rank figures to first-rank: Mrs. Gaskell's novels to Dickens', Lord Acton's thought to John Henry Newman's, the Earl of Derby's political skills to William Gladstone's.

The charge was unfair—in *The Moral Imagination* alone there are essays on Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, and Winston Churchill—but she didn't dispute it. Instead, she smiled and suggested that the second-rank figures are more clearly representative

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of their age. The history of ideas, Chesterton claimed in one of his trademark throwaway lines, often fails to match strict chronology—as when "John Henry Newman took up a sword to parry the blow that Darwin had yet to deliver." The first-rank thinkers are always ahead of us, dodging a problem before we're aware that there is a problem. The second tier doesn't see the problem until it hits them on the nose.

Perhaps that is why the most enjoyable essays in *The Moral Imagination*—the ones that glow with a kind of definitive insight—are about such figures as John Buchan, Benjamin Disraeli (as a novelist), and the Knox brothers. That's not to say the reader will always agree with Himmelfarb's take on a subject. She clearly feels some sympathy for Ronald Knox, and when Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ* was dominating the news, she wrote for the *Washington Post* a cool rejection of religious fervor that might have come straight from Knox's dismissals in his 1950 book *Enthusiasm*. But when her essay appeared in 2000—occasioned by the reprinting of the novelist Penelope Fitzgerald's biography of her father, the editor of *Punch*, and his brothers—I felt that Himmelfarb hadn't quite spent enough time on the impact of Knox's mystery novels.

Of course, she had much else to cover, for Knox was also running around preaching at Oxford, inventing the comic genre of pseudo-scholarship about Sherlock Holmes, translating the Bible by himself, and being the premier Catholic apologist in Britain.

But that points at another feature of the figures Himmelfarb has spent her life writing about: their boundless energy. John Buchan—Lord Tweedsmuir, as he became—feels like the last Victorian, not so much because of his attitudes, but because he could write the classic boys' book *Prester John*, work in politics, serve as the last British governor-general of Canada, and publish dozens of adult novels like *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. (Himmelfarb is the only person I've ever found who notices how much more complicated and interesting than anyone might expect are the novels featuring the lawyer Edward Leithen, possibly intended by Buchan as a semi-autobiographical figure.)

Or perhaps Winston Churchill is the last Victorian, and for much the same reason, albeit on a larger scale: He had the energy, the adventurousness, that made him seem to arrive from a different age than England

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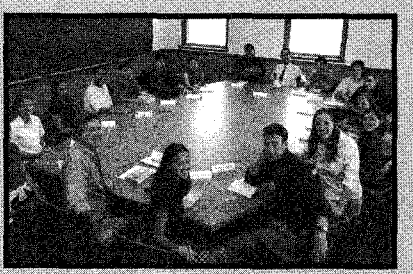

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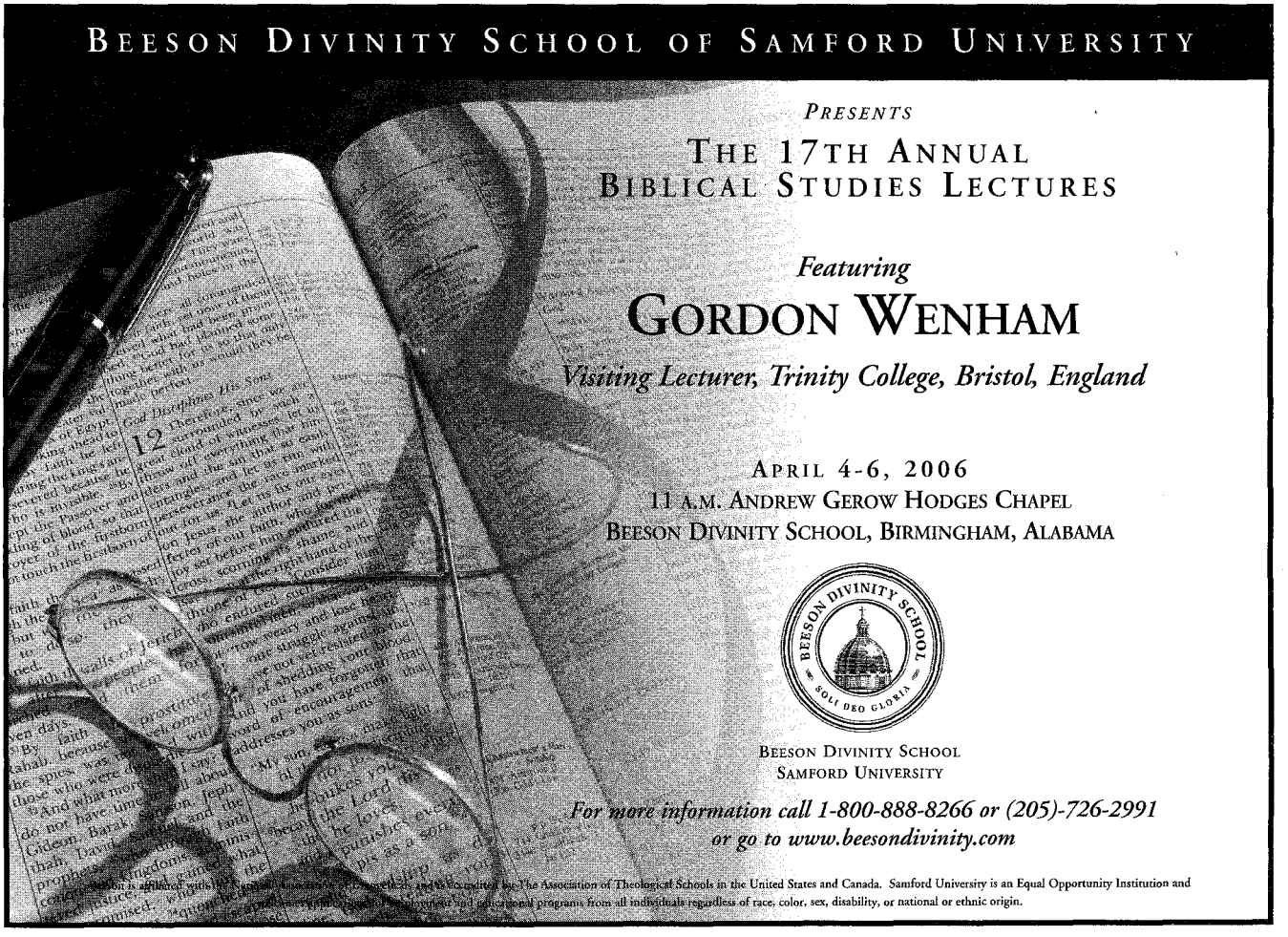
knew in 1939. If Charles Dickens is the definitive Victorian, it is not simply because he was the dominant figure in the artistic genre of the novel that—in several important ways—the Victorians invented and perfected. He was also a Victorian in the way that he lived and wrote: the mad energy of his prose, the mad frenetic pace of his life. He was a force of nature or a social movement, more than he was a man. "There have been at work among us three great social agencies," Himmelfarb quotes a Nonconformist minister observing in 1853: "the London City Mission; the novels of Mr. Dickens; the cholera."

Will the moral imagination help us to understand such people? In her essay on *Middlemarch*, Himmelfarb defends Dorothea's second marriage to Ladislaw rather than Lydgate by downplaying, to some extent, George Eliot's preachiness. That seems right, and a good corrective to common misreadings of the book. But we shouldn't forget that George Eliot genuinely *was* preachy. There's a reason Nietzsche singles out "little moralistic females à la Eliot" for special scorn. As Himmelfarb notes, in the second edition of *Middlemarch*, Eliot trimmed the novel's ending complaint about the hypocrisy of a culture that would not object to marrying a ripe young girl like Dorothea off to an old dry stick like Causabon—after reviewers pointed out that Dorothea's neighbors did plenty of objecting early in the book. But Eliot reinserted much of that complaint back into later editions, all looping around to the novel's peculiar beginning notion that Dorothea somehow has the talents of St. Teresa of Avila while being deprived by her culture of opportunities to express them.

In the end, Gertrude Himmelfarb's sense of the imagination is much like Edmund Burke's: a power that somehow reflects both the old philosophical concept of an image-reader and the Romantic notion of an image-maker. The historian's task is to read the moral images of the past, the intersection of feelings and ideas as they actually came to be in the social order. And the social commentator's role is to form moral images by which we might understand in the present what we've gained and what we've lost since those energetic Victorians strode the earth. The hope, of course, is to perceive again all the decent drapery of life—"furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies."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A Jesus Just for Me

What Jesus Meant
by Garry Wills
Viking, 176 pages, $24.95

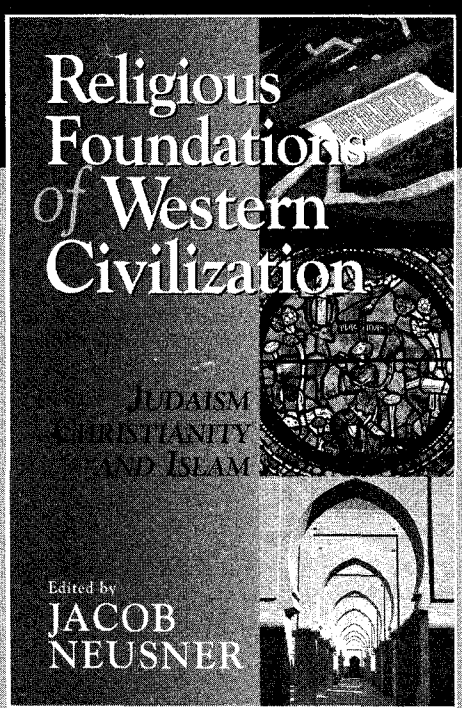
Reviewed by Edward T. Oakes, S.J.

At least you can say this for Garry Wills—he isn't afraid to change his mind. Whether that malleability is good or bad depends, I suppose, on your view of his political shift from right to left. As a Jesuit seminarian in the 1950s (he left the Society of Jesus well before ordination), he rebelled against the liberal editorials of the Jesuit opinion weekly *America* and soon began writing for William Buckley's flagship conservative periodical *National Review* and penned a fine study of G.K. Chesterton. But when the Berrigan brothers made opposition to the Vietnam war a *cause célèbre* for the Catholic left, Wills began a journey that started with *Bare Ruined Choirs* (a book praising the Berrigans) and concluded with his appointment as the *de facto* lone Catholic voice on the secular-liberal *New York Review of Books*, where his articles jostle those by atheist Darwinians and defenders of *Roe v. Wade*.

While most of his books since his move to that liberal aerie have dealt with American history, he has also joined the culture wars now raging inside the Catholic Church, and very much on the liberal side. This became most evident with his 2000 book *Papal Sin*, one of several recent books from liberal Catholics trying to argue for their brand of Catholicism by the simple (if vulgar) expedient of beating up on the reputation of Pius XII. But to make that link plausible, from the perceived perfidy of Pius leading more or less directly to the failure of John Paul II to promote the liberal Catholic evangel, Wills also had to set forth his own theology—which was, to put it mildly, incoherent.

In *Papal Sin* he took the familiar liberal position on contraception and women's ordination, insisting that the popes after Vatican II thwarted authentic development of doctrine and ignored the voice of the laity. But he also denied that Christ instituted a hierarchical priesthood or meant to set in train any apostolic succession at all. In other words, Rome is wrong not to allow the ordination of

Edward T. Oakes, S.J., *is Chester & Margaret Paluch Professor of Theology at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, the seminary for the Archdiocese of Chicago.*



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women, but Jesus did not institute a priesthood to begin with; the ban on contraception was wrongly decided, but the Church has no magisterial office to rule on that matter anyway. And to add to the confusion, Wills claims to admire two Catholics above all others: St. Augustine and Cardinal Newman, even though Wills' own pontifications on sex differ entirely from Augustine's views, and his lucubrations on development bear no resemblance to Newman's own painstaking historical analysis, which would point out to Wills that false doctrines cannot be said to "develop."

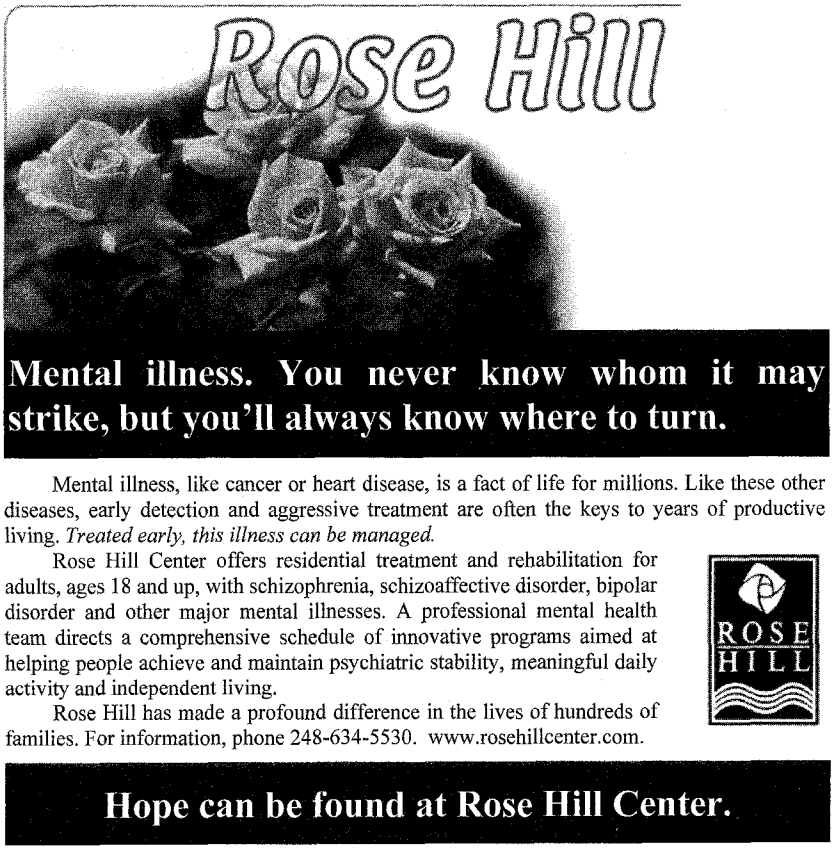
Enough readers picked up on these blatant contradictions to write Wills to ask why he still considers himself a Catholic, to which his 2002 book, *Why I Am a Catholic*, was meant to serve as a reply. The book certainly showed that Wills regards himself as an orthodox Christian, for he stoutly insisted there that he holds to the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation as understood by the first six ecumenical councils of the Church. The trouble is that, as several reviewers pointed out, his Catholicism differs here in no way from the High Church wing of Anglicanism. (Newman became a Catholic precisely because he saw that development did not stop with the sixth century.) Furthermore, doctrines like the Trinity and Incarnation remain bloodless abstractions when they are not set in the context of the Atonement and Resurrection, on which Wills had little to say. Until now.

In that regard, his latest book, *What Jesus Meant*, represents a step forward. First, Wills finally comes out with a robust profession of faith in the Resurrection, the linchpin for all other Christian dogmas. Moreover, he takes the portrait of Jesus in the gospels "as is," without the surgical amputations of late-eighteenth-century Thomas Jefferson or the late-twentieth-century Jesus Seminar (whose two methodologies are uncannily similar, as Wills rightly points out). And best of all, he sees that the gospels must be taken as they have come down to us precisely because of the Resurrection (which for Wills very much includes an empty tomb):

> Jesus as a person does not exist outside the gospels and the only reason he exists there is because of their authors' faith in the Resurrection. . . . The only Jesus we have is the Jesus of faith. If you reject the faith, there is no reason to trust anything the gospels say. The Jesus of the gospels is the Jesus preached, who is the Jesus resurrected. Belief in his continuing activity in the members of his mystical body is the basis of Christian belief in the gospels.

Wills is even better on the Atonement, a doctrine now widely rejected by liberal Christians because of its alleged reliance on an image of God as patriarchal child-abuser. Alluding to a play by Chesterton called *The Surprise*, about a puppeteer who was so fond of his marionettes that he prayed they might come alive, Wills deftly explains Chesterton's plot as a parable for the Atonement. When the puppeteer gets his wish and his marionettes come alive, they begin to bicker and speak their own lines. At this point, the puppet master exclaims to his now-independent characters, "Stop! I'm coming down." In other words, in Wills' exegesis, "Now that his creatures have free will, the puppet master can no longer manipulate them from above. He must come down to be with them, to fight for them."

But larded throughout these insights are others that show that Wills is still trapped inside his incoherent theology, which seems to be animated by a basically elitist crypto-Anglican sensibility. This becomes especially glaring, indeed annoying,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when he pits Jesus against Pope Benedict XVI. For despite his defense of the Atonement, Wills actively dissents from Catholic teaching on the sacrificial character of the Eucharist, which he sees only as an anticipatory meal of the Messianic banquet in heaven. This dissent from the Council of Trent means, not surprisingly, that the pope has got it wrong and Jesus got it right:

> Why, in the richness of this banquet tradition, would Benedict XVI, when he was Cardinal Ratzinger, say that it was unworthy to treat the Catholic Mass as a meal? Why would he say that altars should not allow the priest to face his brothers and sisters in Christ as across a dinner table? Why would he say that the priest should turn his back on the congregation and commune only with his God? Why would he say that others should not share in this activity of the priest, who is alone responsible for what occurs? Did he think that Jesus, at the Last Supper, stopped in the course of the meal, stood up, crossed a barrier separating him from his followers, and muttered to God in a language (Latin) neither he nor they understood?

Cute. But again, as with *Papal Sin*, Wills' problem with the pope does not center so much on a disagreement with his policies or theology but with the fact that he is a pope at all. For, claims Wills, "the opposite of hierarchy is equality, and Jesus was a radical egalitarian." The whole superstructure of the Catholic Church is the problem, a form of hierarchical governance that puts the Church in direct and immediate conflict with *everything* that Jesus stood for:

> The gospels are felt as a deep threat to the institutional church. When Saint Francis embodied the radical poverty of the gospel, authorities supported those who would tame the Franciscans and make them conform to more "normal" religious life. Thus the worker priests had to be crushed—by Pope Pius XII. And the base communities were closed—by Pope John Paul II, who took Pius XII as his ideal. Gilbert Chesterton said that Christianity has not failed—it has just never been tried. But when it is tried, it is seen as a threat, just as Jesus was. Churches resist all radicalism—which means that they resist Jesus. They pay lip service to the poor, while distancing themselves from the poor. They do not reflect enough on the obvious—that Jesus wore no gorgeous vestments. He neither owned nor used golden chalices or precious vessels. He had no jeweled ring to be kissed.

These standard, and by now wearisomely clichéd, polemics recall nearly every hoary rhetorical trope of the Puritans. Of course, if Wills wants to become a Puritan, nothing is stopping him—except himself, it would seem. For, most confusingly, his John Knox persona suddenly turns into the reincarnation of Bishop Thomas Cranmer, when, not forty pages later, he starts *defending* the hierarchy, albeit of the Anglican variety: "Pope Benedict XVI," Wills sneers, "when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger, wrote in 1998 that it is an infallible teaching of the church that Anglican bishops and priests are fake bishops and priests, dispensing fake sacraments, because they are outside the apostolic succession." (I guess that means that at least *these* priests and bishops have been absolved of the sin of wearing gorgeous vestments, owning gold plate and wearing bejeweled episcopal rings. Ecclesiastical pomp is allowed, it would seem, provided one is not in union with Rome.)

One finishes this occasionally illuminating book wondering whether

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its author is ever going to drop his tiresome pose as a suburban Poverello and take a course in elementary logic. As he should know from his own position as a Catholic professor at a secular university, the two great institutional legacies of the Middle Ages to modern civilization are the Catholic Church and the contemporary university, of which the latter is surely the more rigidly hierarchical: With its politically correct orthodoxies, its hegemonically imposed anti-hegemonic discourse, its salary-mongering, its freedom from taxation (how Constantinian!), its speech codes, its teacher evaluations conducted *sub secreto pontificio*, its heated debate over the minutest matters, its hair-splitting fights over teaching loads and research assistants (tenure as benefice!), the contemporary university makes the Catholic Church look like a Quaker meeting house. Wills clearly learned to write from these scholastic masters of liberal ideology and incoherent attitudinizing. One wishes he would obey our nation's Truth in Advertising laws and not claim St. Augustine and Cardinal Newman as his mentors.

Religion and the Legitimate State

The Jewish Social Contract: An Essay in Political Theology
by David Novak
Princeton University Press, 284 pages, $39.50

Reviewed by Alan Mittleman

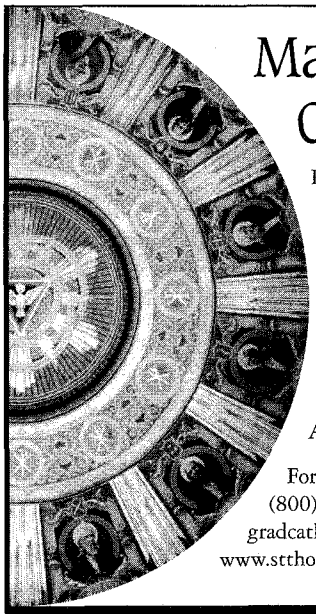
The idea of a social contract first makes its appearance in Plato's *Republic*. Men are naturally prone to commit injustice, and thus injustice is naturally good, Glaucon, one of Socrates' interlocutors, suggests. They would like to commit injustice constantly toward one another and not have to pay a price for it. But because they typically do have to pay a price, they decide "to set down a compact among themselves neither to do injustice nor to suffer it."

Alan Mittleman *is director of the Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies and professor of Jewish philosophy at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.*

The social contract on which justice, law, and political society are based begins, on this account, in what the poet William Butler Yeats called "the foul rag and bone shop of the heart." Men, who are naturally evil, jointly decide to curb their barbarity in order to minimize their own risk. Plato, of course, does not accept this explanation of the nature of justice or of the origins of political society. He rejects the low view of justice that it assumes, as well as the sufficiency of contractarianism as an account of political origins.

There is, however, another source for the idea of a social contract, and this one has had far more influence on the development of the idea in the West. That source is the Bible. One of the Bible's central concepts is covenant, which has both theological and political ramifications. God enters into covenant with all of mankind after the flood, with Abraham and his descendants, and with the *'adat bnei yisrael*, the assembly of Israel, at Sinai. The covenant—an eternal, binding pact—is initiated by God and assented to by humans. God offers his providence and fidelity, while his human covenant partner consents to love and be loyal to the Lord.

The covenant, particularly the Sinai covenant, founds an enduring "vertical" relationship with the divine—and it initiates a proper "horizontal" human political society as well. All of the Israelites who enter into covenant with God retain their fundamental equality vis-à-vis one another as *bnei brit*, covenant partners. Their relations are founded on consent. The goal of their community is liberty: the liberty to worship God and implement his law as the law of their *res publica*. Even when kingship emerges, the king is drawn into a covenantal relation with God but also chosen by the people and rules as a constitutional monarch, his powers delimited by the covenantal agreement, the Torah.



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Biblical covenantalism retained great power among the Jews, who often conceived of their diaspora communities as founded on the agreement and consent of their members. Covenantalism resurfaced among Christians in the Reformation, when Calvinists and other Reformed groups adopted covenanting as the preferred means of founding and legitimating political communities (think, for example, of the Mayflower Compact, or Plymouth Combination as it was originally called). The secularization of the Reformed Protestant concept of covenanting led to social-contract theory among such philosophers as Hobbes, Locke, and Spinoza, where it served purely immanent political ends. The theological-political nexus of biblical covenantalism was severed in favor of a secular, political account of the founding of the ideal form of regime and the philosophical derivation of its moral and political norms.

In his ambitious new book, *The Jewish Social Contract*, David Novak restores the nexus between theology and politics implicit in covenantalism and social contract theory. As in his earlier study of Jewish political theology, *Covenantal Rights*, Novak writes both descriptively and normatively. In *Covenantal Rights*, he provided a comprehensive descriptive account of Jewish social ethics within a ramified framework of rights. In *The Jewish Social Contract*, he describes how Jewish political experience and legal tradition can be understood in terms of covenanting—and subsequently in terms of social contracts with other communities.

In both instances, he does not merely transpose modern, secular interpretive frameworks onto Jewish, especially rabbinic, texts. Rather—and here is the ambitious part of his project—he argues for the inadequacy of the prevailing secular frameworks and for their reconstitution along theologically informed lines. In *Covenantal Rights*, he argued that the modern narrowing of rights-claims—first to individuals and then to groups—provides no sure way to reconcile conflicts of rights, so construed. Only a larger context involving God as a holder and guarantor of rights opens a horizon where reconciliation of conflicting claims, true justice, is conceivable. Now in *The Jewish Social Contract*, he argues that the aspirations of modern democratic republics, founded on social contracts, can only be secured when those contracts originate from agreements between more primal communities founded on covenant. That is, Jews and Christians, the two communities whose origins lie in covenant with the God of Israel, unlike others have experienced what genuine social trust is like—and thus have a genuine foretaste of the Kingdom of God. Their experience of trust, as well as of moral accountability to a power beyond the state, is the necessary warrant for the social trust required to establish a social contract and to sustain the moral responsibility required for its maintenance.

The nub of Novak's argument is that Glaucon and Hobbes are wrong: Contracting cannot be based on fretful calculation alone. Humans need to have experiences of trust in primary communities before they can feel that it is reasonable to trust the strangers with whom they would enter into a social contract. For Novak, such trust can only be experienced in a community founded on revelation, for that is where promise-keeping reaches its telos: God's promises of providence and ultimate justice, already experienced proleptically in the Jewish community and the Church, can be trusted.

The modern democratic state should thus be understood as a community of communities, a limited, properly secular enterprise electively

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stitched together by the primary, revelatory communities that compose it. Those primary communities, the Jewish people and the Church, with their transcendent origins and metaphysical norms of justice, know themselves to be in covenant with God. For their members, belonging to these communities far outweighs the value of belonging to the state, a mere human, contractual artifact. Only because Jews and Christians know themselves to be citizens of the Kingdom of God first, and national citizens second, can modern democracies really protect the rights—the first of which is religious liberty—of their citizens.

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The presence of covenanted communities in the midst of the contractual state ensures that the state government will respect its bounds. When the modern state divinizes itself, as has often happened over the past two centuries, all restraint is lost. Jews and Christians can recognize the limited state, so understood, as a legitimate secular construct. They can be loyal and patriotic to it; they can even sacrifice their lives for it. But they will always, as faithful Jews and Christians, recognize its immanent and confected origins and therefore always deflate its pseudo-religious pretensions. Although they are not the only ones who can make good citizens—Novak has an ingenious argument for how atheists, at least in their public role as citizens, are functional believers—they, in a sense, make the best citizens because they, by their mere presence, remind the state of its origins and limits.

Novak's view is reminiscent of the classic of Reformed Protestant political theory, Johannes Althusius' *Politica*. Althusius held that all human associations, from the family to the Holy Roman Empire, were based on compacts (*pacta*). A true covenantal or federal (from *foedus*, "covenant") thinker, he envisioned society, both in its pre-political and its fully political manifestations, as a product of negotiated agreements at all levels. Sovereignty was shared and distributed across multiple nodes; power was ground-up; rulers were basically administrators.

This comprehensive, biblical-republican grand design basically lost out in the seventeenth century to Jean Bodin's statist model, only to be rediscovered in the twentieth century as a precursor to the political theory of European Union. For both Althusius and Novak, the political community is a community of communities; persons remain members of primary units or primordial groups, deriving their self-understanding and worth from their participation in

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other orders. Althusius also gets to his federal vision through drawing out the implications of biblical covenanting. Unlike Novak, however, he is also indebted to Aristotle. Humans are *naturally* political, which is to say that they need not learn trust through supernatural means. They learn to trust through their experience of family and friendship.

It is odd, to say the least, that a sixteenth-century Protestant thinker, working in a densely religious culture, should give more play to naturalism in politics than a twenty-first-century thinker. Althusius has no need to advert to revelation in his account of political origins; he references the gospels only in the context of how covenanters should treat one another morally. Novak, by contrast, deprives the secular-liberal project of any basis in natural human sociality: The state needs the ontology of covenant.

There has always been a question, in social-contract theory, as to whether the story of the contract is a descriptive, historical account of origins or a prescriptive, normative account of values. There is no question that in John Rawls, for example, it functions strictly as a normative model with no claims to historical factuality. It is less clear in John Locke, who, in his defense of the probable historicity of contract, cites the Bible as the only clear, factual case.

For David Novak, the matter seems confused. He sometimes writes as if he is describing, out of the wealth of Jewish sources, actual instances of contracting. Sometimes he is describing the propensity of historic Jewish thinkers to view relations in contractual terms. At other times he is clearly recommending the social contract as the optimal perspective on political reality. But is it? If nations have not really been founded by social contracts—if the historical claim is just a fiction—does the normative claim remain compelling? Certainly, if there was no historical social contract we can, as Rawls does, still use the contract model as a powerful normative tool. But is there any reason we have to? Novak seems to assume that, in a democracy, this is the best normative-conceptual framework we have. Surely more of an argument is required at this point.

Moreover, a legitimate state may not be as limited as Novak's covenantal-contractual model stipulates. On his account, a state must always respect the integrity of pre-

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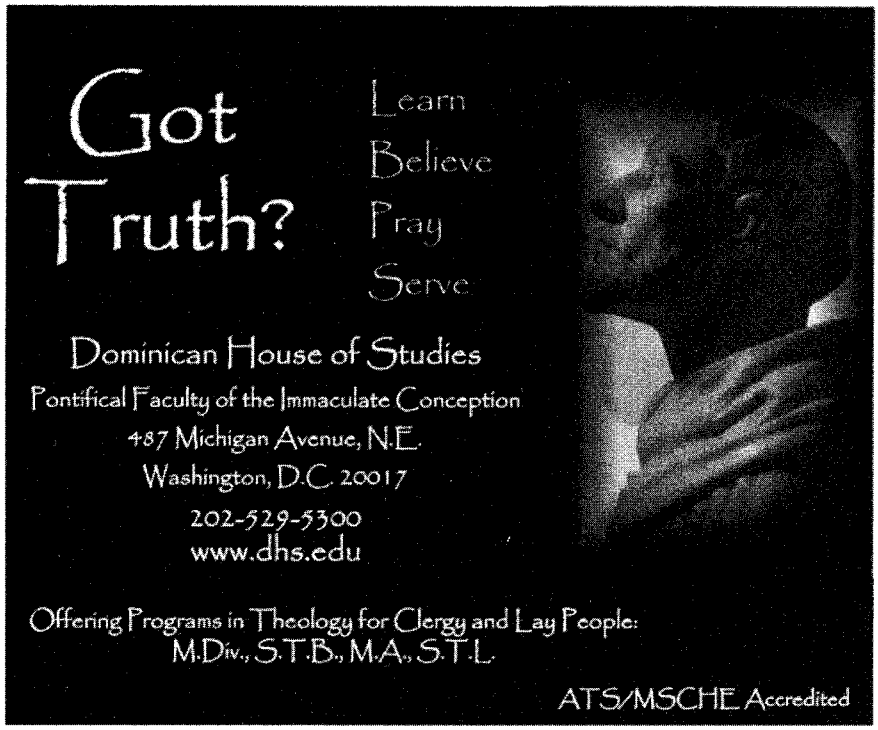
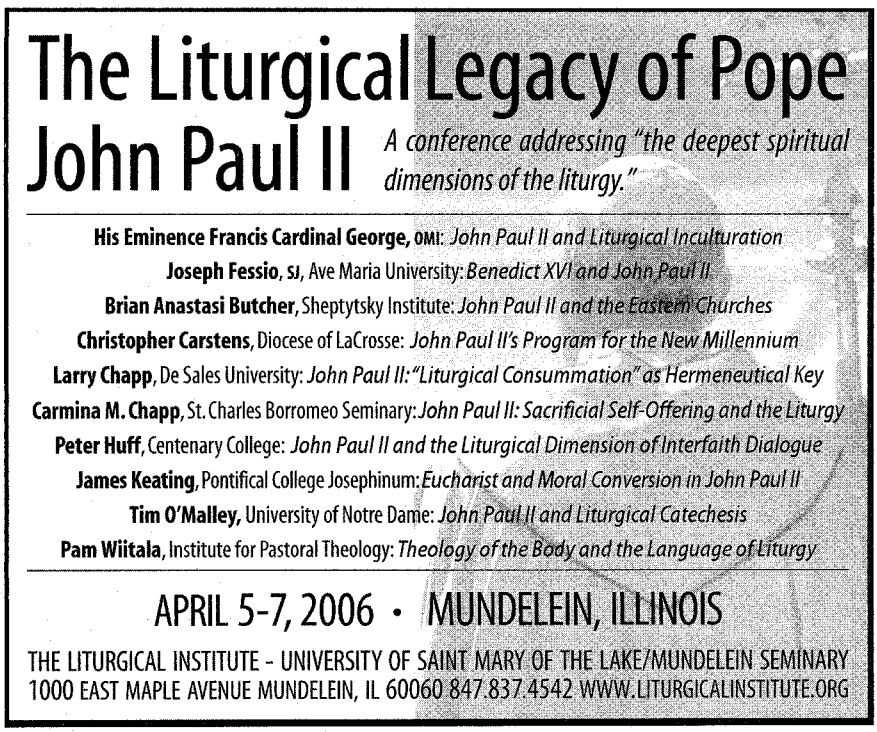
political, or at least of pre-state, institutions such as the family, which are grounded—in the case of Jewish or Christian marriage—on revealed law. But democratic states routinely and legitimately intervene to remove abused children from their parents' households or override the free-exercise rights of, for example, Christian Science parents on behalf of their children. Although we are inclined to draw the boundaries of religious liberty quite broadly, we recognize them to be limited by legitimate public interests, which the state represents. Althusius' account made sense in his own time, an era of city republics, principalities, kingdoms and a thin imperial overlay. But in an era of the highly centralized welfare state, Novak's account of power (if that is the word for it—he actually says very little about power) delegated by enduring primordial communities makes much less sense.

In early modern social-contract thought, the individuals (in the British tradition) or the groups (in the Althusian, German tradition) who were parties to the contract retained whatever rights or power they did not alienate to the state. Their retention of power effectively limited the state. In Novak's view, the presence of Jews and Christians, or, more forcefully, their democratic activism on behalf of their abiding, divinely commissioned interests, limits the state. But this is putting the cart before the horse. The Framers, in the American case, were political men who constructed a limited, rights-respecting republic for political reasons. They accepted the imperative of religious liberty and eventually worked out a synthesis to protect it but they did so as *political* founders, not as religious contractarians. Furthermore, the groups that they knew would limit federal power and retain pre-contractual rights were the individual states, not the primordial religious communities, and these states are no less political than the national government. In short, the complex relation between religious communities and the state, both in historical and in normative terms, cannot be easily captured or definitively described by the ambiguous concept of social contract.

What David Novak's account in *The Jewish Social Contract* provides is a rationale for how orthodox religious people might accept the legitimacy of the democratic, delimited secular orders in which they live. Whether it can move our reflection on the grounds of democratic order, the true ambition of the book, is more open to question.

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Apologetics, Unapologetically

A History of Apologetics
by Avery Cardinal Dulles
Ignatius, 417 pages, $18.95

Reviewed by Thomas Guarino

Faculty wags have long wisecracked that contemporary Catholicism specializes not in apologetics but in apologies. Unfair as this quip may be, Catholicism does appear at times to have abandoned a robust defense of Christian faith and doctrine in favor of corporate acts of contrition for past errors of the Church's members. This is one reason Cardinal Dulles' work is a salubrious reminder to apostates from the apologetical cause that the discipline has a long and illustrious pedigree worthy of current emulation.

Dulles's latest, *A History of Apologetics*, is an updated and expanded version of a volume originally published in 1971. As Cardinal Dulles laments in the new preface, he could hardly have chosen a worse time to publish a book on the defense of the Christian faith. Not only was the original publisher on the brink of extinction, the apologetical discipline itself was at ebb tide theologically. One reason apologetics went into eclipse, of course, is that the discipline smacked of arrogant, intolerant, and triumphal attitudes, capital sins in modern intellectual life. For many, the very term "apologetics" brings to mind the desiccated and jejune rationalism that, they imagine, Vatican II was striving to overcome.

In his original preface, reprinted in this revised edition, Dulles writes that he intends neither a defense of Christianity nor an apology for apologetics. His aim, rather, is a comprehensive survey of how thoughtful Christians have sought to "give a reason for the hope that is in them" (1 Peter 3:15). The chief concern, then, is with apologetics in general rather than a particular denominational approach. As the Baptist theologian Timothy George observes in his engaging new foreword, the book will be welcomed by all Christians because Dulles has examined how apologists have responded to the pressing issues confronting Christianity over the course of centuries.

And, indeed, Dulles takes us, in this expansive synthesis, from the earliest New Testament kerygmatic proclamation up through the contemporary arguments for the complementarity of faith and physics advanced by John Polkinghorne and Stanley Jaki. Since the panorama of thinkers and themes that the author summarizes and evaluates is so extensive, one strains trying to encapsulate it.

Of course, certain figures stand out: the second-century writer Athenagoras of Athens, for example, for his insistence that Christians are bound to strict standards of chastity and to a respect for life extending to unborn infants; Origen and Augustine, for their philosophical sophistication and logical rigor; Eusebius of Caesarea, for his response to Porphyry, perhaps the most significant opponent of Christianity in antiquity; John Damascene for his dialogue with Islam; Anselm for his reflections on faith and reason; Abelard for his unpolemical attitude toward Judaism; Thomas Aquinas, for his seamless introduction of Aristotelianism into apologetics; Nicholas of Cusa, for his balanced evaluation of the Koran; Pascal for his accent on intuitive logic and his juxtaposition of the *esprit de finesse* with the *esprit de géometrie*; Kierkegaard, who calls attention to the offense of the Gospel, recognizing that "philosophic reason itself stands under divine judgment"; Chateaubriand, who appealed to Christian achievements in literature, culture and the arts, arguing that religion is tightly interwoven with the imagination; Newman, who emphasized the subjective and intuitive dimensions informing religious inquiry; Barth, who rejected attempts to justify revelation on the

Thomas Guarino *is professor of theology at Seton Hall University.*

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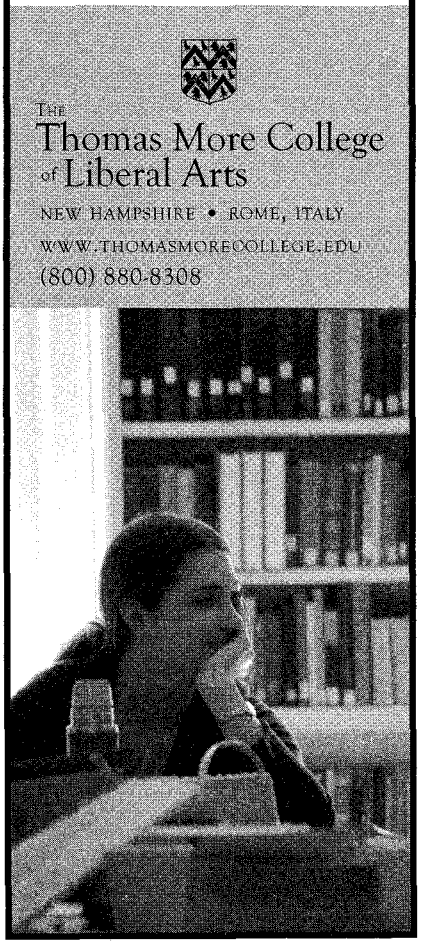

basis of extra-theological criteria; and, finally, C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton, who ardently defended classical Christian orthodoxy and whose work remains influential today (attested by the expanded attention Dulles accords them in the new edition) perhaps especially among evangelicals.

Dulles treats the second half of the twentieth century in an entirely new, forty-two-page addition (the most significant of several supplements and emendations found throughout the volume). Vatican II, he observes, with its irenic and serene tone, undermined the polemical attitude often connected with apologetics. He adds, however, that in several places the council insists that the disciple of Christ is bound "faithfully to proclaim" and "vigorously to defend" the Christian faith. Vatican II, then, is not mute on the apologetical issue. Popular at the time Dulles first wrote is what has been called "immanent apologetics": the attempt to offer probative arguments for God not by way of objective causal metaphysics (a Thomistic benchmark) but by an analysis of the intentionality of the human spirit.

Maurice Blondel, for example, in his great work *L'Action*, argued that a phenomenology of the will reveals an exigency and élan inexorably opening out onto the question of the supernatural. Blondel's work is a restatement, ultimately, of the Augustinian *cor inquietum* or "restless heart" tradition. He opposed this "method of immanence" to the "extrinsicist" and evidential apologetics of his own day that found no touchstone in human experience. Karl Rahner, for his part, argued at length that there is a dynamic movement of the intellect toward Infinite Being necessarily inscribed in every act of knowing. Consequently, in the actions of human reasoning—the actions defining man as made in God's image and likeness—one finds an intrinsic link between creature and Creator. Rahner further develops what he calls a "searching Christology" asking these questions: If our whole being is oriented towards God *ab ovo*, then is it not intelligible that we should seek some message from him? And where should we find this message except in time and history?

The philosophies developed by Blondel and Rahner served not only apologetical purposes but also effectively argued that a Christian anthropology could not accept the Enlightenment notion of an autonomous human nature essentially unrelated to God (an idea leading inexorably to the claim that religion is entirely a matter of private preference). Their own work reflected the patristic understanding, masterfully revivified by Henri de Lubac, that there exists no purely "natural" sphere, only the *unicus ordo supernaturalis*, the one supernatural order of grace, a position whose implications are vigorously pursued today by the Radical Orthodoxy movement.

Other late twentieth century apologists discussed by Dulles include Hans Urs von Balthasar, who, having learned a great deal from his dialogue with Karl Barth, accented the dangers of anthropological thinking and reacted against Lessing's "broad, ugly ditch" between necessary truths of reason and contingent historical events. Lessing's dichotomy represented Idealism at its worst, sanctioning *a priori* limits on God's action in history, thereby rendering itself incapable of recognizing Christ as the image of divine love. Resonances of Balthasar's thought may be found today in Jean-Luc Marion, especially in Marion's denunciation of those philosophies that reductively and unimaginatively seek to limit the impossible, the excess, the unexpected Gift. Dulles also examines the thought of such eminent apologists as Wolfhart Pannenberg and Richard Swinburne (whose work has surely not received the attention it deserves) as well as the well-known arguments

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of the Reformed epistemologists. Reference is also made to those engaged in the contemporary debates on Darwinian theory.

One can see over the course of the book that Cardinal Dulles, while always even-handed in his evaluations, has a certain penchant for those apologists who recognize the complex and elusive chain of events that brings us to the act of faith (rather than those who propose purportedly ironclad rationalistic approaches). And one understands the nature of this attraction. Calculative and demonstrative arguments are rarely convincing since, no matter the probative nature of the logic adduced, they often fail to take account of the anterior subjective attitudes and dispositions of the inquirer. Blaise Pascal, Joseph Butler, and John Henry Newman are preferable, then, to the evidentialists who assume that assent cannot be lacking to right-thinking individuals.

Dulles' survey indicates that a viable apologetics must combine many different elements: reason and the heart, intellect and the imagination, the objective world and the inner spirit. The most effective apologetics appeals to the mystery that encompasses the entirety of human existence. Indeed, the best apologetics, as the most compelling practitioners of the discipline have understood, speaks to the unbeliever lurking in our own hearts.

When comparing the 1971 text to the latest edition, one sees that very few of Dulles' earlier judgments are in need of revision, attesting to the strength of the original research. Some light tweaking occurs, on Thomas Aquinas and Newman for example, but one observes no significant shifts of opinion. Other aspects of the text, including footnotes and bibliography, have been brought up to date.

Cardinal Dulles concludes that while apologetics is neither necessary nor sufficient for Christian faith, it is important that believers give reasons for the various challenges made to the intelligibility of their faith. As this magisterial and masterful exposition makes clear, Christianity has consistently developed apologetical approaches for two reasons. One is the essentially conjunctive nature of faith and reason. How is the act of faith always a reasonable act, even if reason alone, absent God's grace, can never bring one to full-blooded belief? Secondly, the Christian faith possesses a determinate content making specific truth-claims. Its foundational beliefs are understood as properly mediating (invoking here all of the qualifications between human language and divine existence) something of reality itself. Given such positions, apologists through the centuries have rightly taken as their task the development of arguments as to why the extraordinary claims of Christianity are neither repugnant to reason, nor, indeed, without significant and convincing support.

Briefly Noted

The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview
by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese
Cambridge University Press,
828 pages, $31.99

In his Second Inaugural Address, Abraham Lincoln remarked that Northerners and Southerners "read the same Bible, and pray to the same God." In this volume, consisting largely of previously published articles and book chapters, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese suggest the need to qualify that assertion. As the nineteenth century progressed, they argue, Southerners and Northerners developed different, almost antithetical, understandings of Christianity. They read the same Bible, but they read it very differently, and even the God to Whom they prayed was not quite the same: He remained firmly Trinitarian in the South, while sliding toward Unitarian in the North. Southern Protestant theologians denounced their Northern brethren for leaving the Catholic Church as the sole defender of orthodoxy in the region. Behind it all, the Genoveses claim, was slavery. "The American South ranks with ancient Greece and Rome among the few genuine slave societies," and it deeply influenced the South's social structure, economy, and culture. Southern defenders of slavery, who increased not only in numbers but in the extravagance of their claims in the 1840s and 1850s, availed themselves of whatever they could find to defend their "peculiar institution." They challenged the abolitionists to find any place in the Bible where slavery is condemned, and they bolstered their challenge by citing passages where it seemed to be sanctioned. The leading abolitionists were hard put to counter the Southerners' arguments. Most of the abolitionists—John Brown being the most prominent exception—eventually adopted a latitudinarian reading of Scripture, emphasizing the Spirit; some even boldly declared that if the Bible sanctioned slavery they wanted no more to do with it. But the religious differences turned on more than Scripture. The authors paint a picture of different approaches to such meta-religious topics as historical change, social morality, and the legitimacy of government. There was a streak of radicalism in the South—secessionism was itself a radical act—but Southern religious leaders generally inclined toward organic models of social change, the ideal being a gradual civilizing process emanating from traditions of civility and gentility. "Chivalry" was a term frequently heard in the South. Derived from a romanticized Middle Ages in the novels of Sir Walter Scott and others,

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it folded into the Christian paternalism that was used to justify slavery. As one minister-professor put it, our Negroes, "in common with minors, imbeciles, and uncivilized persons, have a right to be governed and protected." Another minister used the Aristotelian categories of "commutative justice" (fair exchange of monetary values) and "distributive justice" (allotment of happiness according to rule) to make the same point: Unlike the North, which recognizes only the former, Southerners provide for the happiness of our slaves long after their monetary value has ended. Many Southern ministers regarded the war as the supreme test: Either slavery was brought up to "Abrahamic standards" or God would send the heathens to punish the South, as he had done to the Israelites. The book retains the scholarly texture and intensity of the journal articles that largely compose it. As such, it is sometimes fatiguingly over-documented, piling up example after example; some of those examples would have been better consigned to endnotes. But chief among the book's many virtues is the authors' sympathetic but not uncritical ear to the dominant voices of the South as it drifted toward catastrophe. In the preface they liken their view of the South's former "master class" to that of I.F. Stone toward Thomas Jefferson. When asked how he, a lifelong opponent of racism, could admire a slaveowner like Thomas Jefferson, Stone answered, "Because history is tragedy, not melodrama."

—*George McKenna*

Righteous Gentiles: How Pius XII and the Catholic Church Saved Half a Million Jews from the Nazis
by Ronald J. Rychlak
Spence, 400 pages, $29.95

Old prejudices die hard; myths, even harder. In his new history of Europe since 1945, Tony Judt laments how "the Catholic Church got off very lightly indeed, in view of Pius XII's warm relations with Fascism and the pro-actively blind eye he turned to Nazi crimes." That a historian of Judt's distinction could make such a remark, without the slightest compunction, tells you how secure anti-Catholic myths remain within academia. The ideal man for correcting the record is Ronald Rychlak, professor of law at the University of Mississippi and recognized expert on the evaluation of evidence. In *Hitler, the War, and the Pope* (2000), Rychlak helped turn back the wave of anti-Pius propaganda unleashed by John Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope* (1999). Cornwell has since retracted his central charge (now saying he finds it "impossible to judge" the motives of Pius), while Rychlak has become America's leading authority on the topic. In *Righteous Gentiles*, he reviews the various allegations that have recently surfaced against Pius and the Church and methodically responds to each one. The writings of Robert Katz, Garry Wills, James Carroll, Susan Zuccotti, Michael Phayer, and Daniel Goldhagen are subjected to thorough—and devastating—criticism. Pius XII emerges not as a "bystander" but as a principled and determined foe of Nazi anti-Semitism. *Righteous Gentiles* deals with the entire wartime Church. The documentation provided is overwhelming; Rychlak's command of the relevant literature undeniable. So too is his intellectual honesty and dispassionate evaluation of the evidence. Just as Rychlak never allows a false accusation to go unchallenged, he is the first to acknowledge true wrongdoing where it occurred. His conclusion—that the Catholic Church under Pius XII was imperfect (and therefore open to criticism)—is likely to advance the cause of Pius XII and bring justice to a topic often devoid of it. By sticking closely to the facts, Rychlak has produced a powerful work of scholarship: the finest single study on Pius XII and the wartime Church extant.

—*William Doino, Jr.*

Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation
edited by William C. Placher
Eerdmans, 468 pages, $38

Detailed enough for researchers, readable enough for a general audience, this handy resource offers fifty-seven texts about Christian vocation, each introduced by the editor. Dividing the development of vocation into four periods, Placher retells the history of the Church. "Calling" or *klesis* in the early Church meant persecution, martyrdom, and, later, asceticism. In the Middle Ages, the term *vocatio* was reserved for priests, nuns, and monks. With the Reformation, every job became a "calling"—translated *Beruf* by Martin Luther—and every person was "called"; salvation was by grace alone, the reformers said, and a life in a convent was no more exceptional than one spent making shoes. And now the present day, when, like the first Christians, believers know that simply professing one's faith in an un-Christian culture can be a worthy calling. For the most part, Placher traces all this without passing judgment. He does, though, consider his profession his calling, and recognizes that this can't be the case for the unemployed or what Marx called "alienated labor." So, is it right talk about Ignatius' witness, and "your average nine-to-five," as two equal Christian callings? Barth's selection includes this: "Protestantism successfully expelled monasticism by recalling the fact that *klesis* is the presupposition of all Christian experience. But it lost sight of the divine grandeur and purity of this idea, which were always in some way retained even by monasticism." We would do well to remember the grandeur and purity of the Christian calling in its many forms.

—*John Rose*

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Kabbalah: A Very Short Introduction
by Joseph Dan
Oxford University Press,
148 pages, $18.95

The Jewish esoteric tradition, by its own account, goes back at least to Moses, if not to Abraham. In some legends of Genesis, practical Kabbalah was part of the Creation itself. Joseph Dan, Gershom Scholem Professor of Kabbalah at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, begins his elegantly brief introduction to this vast subject by tracking the meaning of the word "Kabbalah." In the second century, Kabbalah was taken to mean "non-individual, non-experiential religious truth, which is received by tradition." In the Middle Ages, it became the name of a concealed dimension of the received, revealed tradition. Jewish Kabbalah has less to do with the invisible-to-the-naked-eye part of theoretical and experimental science, and more to do with messianic longing and practical redemption. The literary, scriptural and talmudic sources of Kabbalah include Genesis, Ezekiel, the Mishna Tract *Hagiga*, and ancient treatises with names like "The Extended Description of Genesis," "The Sword of Moses," and "The Book of Secrets." The seminal *Sefer Yetzira* (Book of Creation), attributed to the Patriarch Abraham, is a kind of scientific grammar of creation, a chemistry with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet as the elements. Another text, the book *Bahir*, describes ten emanations or *sefirot* of the divine or upper world, which separate into nine masculine and one feminine power. The divine world is shaped like a tree, with branches in this world. Evil proceeds from the fingers of God's left hand. The central Kabbalistic text is the *Zohar*, "The Book of Splendor," written by Spanish Rabbi Moses de Leon in the late thirteenth century. For those who have wandered the many courtyards and chambers of the Kabbalists' house of splendors, *Kabbalah: A Very Short Introduction* provides an always-appropriate reminder that no matter how clear each level of exposition, as layers accumulate, the window grows opaque. And, no matter how simple the set of directions, to follow these texts is to walk in a maze.

—Laurance Wieder

What Happens at Mass
by Jeremy Driscoll, OSB
Liturgy Training, 134 pages, $10.95

Mass guides abound, but Father Jeremy Driscoll has written a modern touchstone. There is nothing extraneous in his brief walk through the Mass, nor is anything given too short a shrift. The book is clear, intelligent, thorough, and touched with awe. Driscoll begins by explaining what Catholics mean by mystery: "a concrete something in which a divine reality is hidden." He then proceeds through each part of the Mass, from the gathering of the faithful through the liturgies of Word and Eucharist through the dismissal, pointing out each concrete sign and its corresponding moment in Scripture and tradition. Everything is related back to the central mystery of the Trinity. Driscoll's lovely little work ought to be read by anyone who desires to engage more deeply with the Mass.

—Mary Angelita Ruiz

Washington's God
by Michael and Jana Novak
Basic, 266 pages, $26

A welcome development of recent years is the number of books debunking the myth that the American founders were post-Christian rationalists or adherents of a vague spirituality conveniently called Deism. In 1837, the first editor of Washington's *Collected Works* wrote: "If a man who spoke, wrote, and acted as a Christian through a long life, who gave numerous proofs of his believing himself to be such, and who was never known to say, write, or do a thing contrary to his professions, if such a man is not to be ranked among the believers of Christianity, it would be impossible to establish the point by any train of reasoning." That judgment is convincingly vindicated by the Novaks, who, while focusing on his religious belief and practice, cast new light Washington—a man whose *gravitas*, contrary to some accounts, was not a pose but a reflection of his deep humility before the God of history Whom he sought to serve.

Participant Observer: Memoir of a Transatlantic Life
by Robin Fox
Transaction, 574 pages, $44.95

In the acknowledgments, Robin Fox calls Irving Louis Horowitz of Transaction Press the "prince of publishers," and little wonder. Few publishers would put out such a huge and hugely self-indulgent memoir as *Participant Observer*. That said, the telling of his tale is frequently witty, entertaining, and informative. Robin Fox is an English anthropologist who has authored, with the equally delightfully named Lionel Tiger, *The Imperial Animal* and many other works making the case for the "nature" side of the interminable nature/nurture controversy over how best to understand why human beings do what they do. Devoutly Christian at first, as a teenager he one day looked out the school room window and decided religion was all fairy tales, although later in life he allows that they might be usefully edifying fairy tales, and maybe even true in one way or another. For those who have the patience, the chief reward of *Participant Observer* is a first-hand account of the wars of ideas about human nature that have dominated much of the intellectual history of the past half century.

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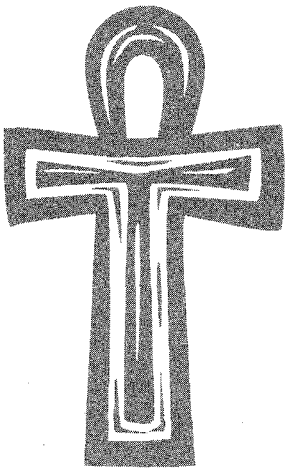

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The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion, Culture, and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

On the Other Side of the Gates

During those younger years as the pastor of a poor, black, inner-city parish in Brooklyn, including the years of working with Martin Luther King, Jr., I was an unapologetic romantic about the critical, even redemptive, part that blacks were to play in the unfolding of the American drama. Many of us were. The subsequent years have been hard on Dr. King's dream. True, most black Americans are better off in most ways of calculating better off. But my version of the dream was attuned to the poor, and especially those concentrated in the hard core of the inner city.

After Hurricane Katrina, there was much chatter about the "rediscovery of the poor." It was almost all nonsense, and I fiercely wish that were not so. By the 1980s it had become widely recognized that there were the poor, and then there were the poor. The first had low incomes, but they also had jobs at which they worked regularly; they reared their children; the children went to school and learned; and their families were on their way to becoming non-poor. Then there were the poor who were called the underclass, especially the urban underclass. The underclass is not solely black but it is mainly black, and by a very wide margin.

We haven't heard much talk about the underclass in recent years. That is not because they have gone away. Far from it, although many of them have been put away in prison. The reason we do not hear about the underclass is that they have become forgettable: confined and contained.

We who live on the right side of the tracks, so to speak, have successfully shielded ourselves from them. It is a domestic version of the Cold War's "containment" policy. Some years ago there was worried discussion about the privileged who live in "gated communities." Ours is now a gated society. The gates are open to those who play by the rules, but tightly shut against the threatening underclass.

It is almost inconceivable today that we would have the kind of urban riots that were a major feature of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Black radicals threatened to burn down the cities and succeeded in wrecking the neighborhoods where they lived. White flight accelerated, leaving city centers abandoned and rotting. "Black Power" succeeded to the extent that blacks were left in charge of the ruins. Detroit, while it is the premier example, is far from alone. New York bought off or otherwise co-opted black leaders, who were recruited to keep the underclass in its place. Al Sharpton and a few other court jesters who dance a mean radical shuffle are kept around to remind taxpayers why the pay-offs are a good investment.

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The underclass is a minority of a minority. It is defined by a pattern of not playing by the most elementary of the rules. For instance, holding a job, or at least wanting to get a job. For instance, staying in school, at least through eighth grade, or maybe even getting a high school diploma they can read. For another instance, by men not having babies by multiple women whom they decline to support. For a very big for instance, by not engaging in criminal activity.

Social scientist Charles Murray has recently pulled together some of the latest data on the underclass. It makes for grim reading. In the last few years, there has been good news about declining crime rates. One reason is that so much of the underclass is in prison or under correctional supervision. Since Ronald Reagan took office, the number of Americans in various forms of supervision by the criminal justice system has increased by 300 percent. As Murray puts it, "Crime has dropped, but criminality has continued to rise."

The general sense is that these are better times, at least for those who live in enclaves secured against the underclass. The criminals are left to prey on their hapless neighbors, if they are not locked up. Consider the ratio of prisoners to the number of crimes committed. If the ratio was the same as it was when Ronald Reagan took office, we would today have a prison population of 490,000. In fact, the current prison population is over two million. Imagine what the crime rate would be if tomorrow we released 1.6 million prisoners. That is what is meant by declining crime but increasing criminality.

The underclass is unsocialized. They have dropped out of society and its expectations. Criminal activity is actively anti-social; not working is declining to participate. In 1954, when such figures were first gathered, nine percent of young black men, ages twenty to twenty-four, were not working and not looking for work. In 1999, when businesses were desperately seeking workers for every job level, the figure was 30 percent. And, of course, that does not include all the young men in jail.

Almost everybody who has been paying attention agrees that the big change is in the number of young males who grow up without fathers. This is now an intergenerational phenomenon. It was the harsh reality I witnessed years ago in Brooklyn. Not only boys who did not know what it means to have a father but boys who did not know what it means to *be* a father. They did not know any men who accepted open-ended responsibility for their children. These boys did not expect to be, and almost nobody expected them to be, fathers to their children.

Today, 35 percent of all children born in America are born to women who are not married. The black illegitimacy rate, as of 2003, is 68 percent. There are large black churches in our cities that have not had a wedding in years. Consider that, when Daniel Patrick Moynihan caused a great ruckus by announcing the breakdown of the black family forty years ago, the black illegitimacy rate was 24 percent. It is not true that illegitimacy has risen precipitously throughout the population. It is heavily concentrated in low-income groups, and especially among blacks. We hear good news about falling teenage births. That is balanced by the fact that blacks have many more abortions. The critical factor with respect to the underclass is the proportion of children born and raised without fathers. "That proportion," Murray writes, "is the indicator that predicts the size of the underclass in the next generation."

With the "rediscovery of poverty" after Katrina, all kinds of government programs are being proposed and massively funded. They have all been tried before. They have failed before, in largest part because they are premised upon the assumption that the problem is poverty and not the underclass. As Murray writes, "Poor people who are not part of the underclass seldom need help to get out of poverty. . . . The statistical reality is that people who get into the American job market and stay there seldom remain poor unless they do something self-destructive. And behaving self-destructively is the hallmark of the underclass."

Some may think Murray's conclusion is excessively stark, or even cynical. He writes: "Hurricane Katrina temporarily blew away the screens that we have erected to keep the underclass out of sight and out of mind. We are now to be treated to a flurry of government efforts from politicians who are shocked, shocked, by what they saw. What comes next is depressingly predictable. Five years from now, the official evaluation will report that there were no statistically significant differences between the subsequent lives of people who got the government help and the lives of people in a control group. Newspapers will not carry that story, because no one will be interested any longer. No one will be interested because we will have long since replaced the screens, and long since forgotten."

Refusing to Give Up

It is not true that no one will be interested. It probably is true that most Americans, including many working-class and middle-class blacks, will not be interested. As long as they don't pose a threat to the rest of us, the underclass illegitimacy rate could climb

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to 95 percent and there could be three million or more in prison without prompting any sense of national crisis. The great majority of Americans, I expect, are weary of hearing about the plight of blacks and probably welcome the fact that the largest minority is now Hispanic, which dramatically changes the discussion of "minority rights" and is devoid of lingering feelings of guilt about slavery and all that. Among Hispanics there is not an underclass comparable in scale or intergenerational obstinacy.

Yet there are many who have not given up on the underclass. There are churches and church-related social programs that do the hard, slogging, day-by-day work of helping young people put their lives together and keep them together. There are occasionally black leaders from the religious, entertainment, and sports worlds who risk being called Uncle Toms by trying to persuade young people that it is not cool to cultivate a dress and demeanor that makes you unemployable, to sexually exploit women, or to accuse those who want to learn of "acting white." And there are mothers beyond numbering who, with no help from a man, strive valiantly to set their children on the way out from the underclass.

Simple Justice

As for public policy, a strong case can be made that the greatest single injustice perpetrated upon the urban poor is the captivity of their children in thoroughly rotten government-run school systems. There are heartening signs that the movement for parental choice in education is picking up steam. We have addressed this question again and again. John Coons' essay "School Choice as Simple Justice," in the April 1992 issue of First Things, remains one of the most trenchant briefs for something that can be done and would make a real difference, also for the underclass. Across the country, there are today promising experiments with educational vouchers and charter schools. In many places, experiments have turned into demonstrations of effectiveness, hastening the day when educational freedom will be a reality for all Americans.

Affluent Americans generally choose their schools by choosing where to live. That is not an option for the poor. Obviously, educational choice will not resolve all the problems of the underclass. But it is something that government could do, and that it is reasonable to believe would effect major change over time. It is something that merits the support of people who know that it is not morally tolerable to ignore the millions of fellow-citizens who we so successfully keep on the other side of the gates.

A while back, Bob Herbert of the *New York Times* surprised his readers with a column devoted to the state of black America. "We can pretend that these terrible things are not happening, but they are. There's a crisis in the black community, and it won't do to place all of the blame on society and government." I say the column was a surprise because over the years Mr. Herbert has, with sometimes tedious repetition, tended to place all, or almost all, the blame on society and government. I don't know what changed his mind. Perhaps he read the above data pulled together by Charles Murray. In any event, the change is most welcome.

He writes, "The problems facing black people today are comparable in magnitude to those of the Jim Crow era of the twentieth century. There were leaders in those days who were equal to the challenge. I believe that nothing short of a new movement, comparable in scope and dedication to that of the civil rights era, is required to bring about the changes in values and behavior needed to halt the self-destruction that is consuming so many black lives. The crucial question is whether the leadership exists to mount such an effort. . . . Despite the sometimes valiant efforts of individuals and organizations across the country, we are not meeting that obligation now. And that's because there's a vacuum where our leadership should be."

Bob Herbert's bold indictment and call for leadership took considerable courage. We must hope that he does not retreat under the withering criticism that is sure to come. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Glenn Loury of Boston University was in the forefront of calling for a very different black leadership. In October 1992 he wrote "Two Paths to Black Power" for First Things, recommending the model of W.E.B. DuBois over that of Booker T. Washington:

> It is time to recognize that further progress toward the attainment of equality for black Americans, broadly and correctly understood, depends most crucially at this juncture on the acknowledgment and rectification of the dysfunctional behaviors which plague black communities, and which so offend and threaten others. Recognize this, and much else will follow. It is more important to address this matter effectively than it is to agitate for additional rights. Indeed, success in such agitation has become contingent upon effective reform efforts mounted from within the black community. . . .
>
> The key point is that progress such as this must be earned, it cannot be demanded. When the effect of past oppression is to leave a people in a diminished state, the attainment of true equality with the former oppressor cannot depend on

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> his generosity, but must ultimately derive from an elevation of their selves above the state of diminishment. It is of no moment that historic wrongs may have caused current deprivation, for justice is not the issue here. The issues are dignity, respect, and self-respect—all of which are preconditions for true equality between any peoples. The classic interplay between the aggrieved black and the guilty white, in which the former demands and the latter conveys recognition of historic injustice, is not an exchange among equals. Neither, one suspects, is it a stable exchange. Eventually it may shade into something else, something less noble—into patronage, into a situation where the guilty one comes to have contempt for the claimant, and the claimant comes to feel shame, and its natural accompaniment, rage, at his impotence.

Ten years later, Loury published *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality* in which he seemed to have reverted to blaming society for the plight of blacks in America. In our May 2002 issue he was taken to task by J.L.A. Garcia and John McWhorter for having retreated to the conventional wisdom of the black establishment. Loury responded to the criticism by saying his new book was addressed to a different audience, one that is mainly white. I confess that I, along with Garcia, McWhorter, and others, did not find the explanation entirely convincing.

There are a few black thinkers (Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams come most prominently to mind) who have, year in and year out, insisted that the healing of the black community—and, most particularly, of the black underclass—is primarily the responsibility of blacks. Those who still claim the antiquated title of "civil rights leaders" have excoriated them without mercy. They are "Uncle Toms," "Oreos," and, most devastatingly, "conservatives." From time to time a prominent black such as comedian Bill Cosby will say what Loury once said and Herbert is now saying. But such courageous eruptions of honesty have in the past been episodic, being quickly smothered by the now weary and wearying rhetoric about the evils of our racist society. Perhaps now, at long last, and after the wasting of lives beyond numbering, there will emerge the leadership for which Bob Herbert, along with too few others, is calling.

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IMMIGRATION THREE-STEP

An issue that is fast heating up and requires discerning moral judgment, although it will more likely elicit clashing moralisms, is that of immigration policy. A while back, I discussed in some detail Samuel Huntington's important book, *Who Are We?* (August/September 2004). On the pro-immigration side of the argument, Huntington is depicted as a nativist, which is unfair. He is alarmed about the huge and growing wave of immigrants from Latin America, chiefly Mexico, that is, he persuasively argues, unprecedented in both size and character. The title question of his book is a question that any people has to ask if they are to sustain their identity as a people. The alternative is to abandon any idea of what it means to be an American. As I wrote earlier, I am not convinced by Huntington's argument, but it is an argument that needs to be engaged if we are to be prepared for the storm of controversy about to burst upon us.

President Bush has repeatedly said that political capital is there to be spent. With the deep disagreements over his policy in the Middle East, and with apparent failure in other initiatives, such as Social Security reform, some may think he has little capital left. But what he has he is now apparently prepared to spend in tackling immigration reform. While the details will have to be worked out by Congress, the president's proposal has three parts: securing the borders, ensuring sufficient immigration to sustain the economy, and making it easier for immigrants to become citizens.

The proposal throws into confusion the usual liberal/conservative alignments. For the playing out of this reform, new scorecards will be required to identify the players. The first part of the game, securing the borders, is widely popular. It does not seem to be a top priority issue with most Americans, but there is a commonsensical assumption that a nation worthy of the name should be able to control who is and who is not admitted. That assumption does not go undisputed. While it does not come right out and say so, the *Wall Street Journal* would seem to favor the abolition of national borders altogether. Many Catholic bishops share that view, although it is not the public position of the bishops conference.

There are politicians who believe that tough talk about securing the borders (not meaning the border with Canada, you may be sure) will pay off on election day. That is perhaps why President Bush kicked off his reform campaign last December with the stern assurance, "We are going to protect the border." He announced that during his time in office there had been a 60 percent increase in spending on securing the border and an addition of thousands of new border guards, with 4.5 million illegal immigrants caught and returned home.

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"Send Them Back"

But, of course, there are an estimated 11 million illegal immigrants in the country. Not long ago I was speaking at a convention in the Southwest. The person sitting next to me at dinner was trying to persuade me that we should "send them back." I asked him to look around the ballroom where about a thousand people were being served by hundreds of waiters and busboys, all of them, so far as I could see, Latino, and probably a large percentage of them here illegally. The same immigrant preponderance would likely obtain among the kitchen workers, the truck drivers who delivered the food, and those who had gathered and prepared it for shipping. My tablemate was unmoved.

Here in New York, in my daily walk to Immaculate Conception and to this magazine's office, I pass dozens of businesses, along with construction sites, hospitals, and nannies caring for children, all reflecting the city's dependence upon Hispanic immigration. They are here because immigrants are, as the president says, doing the work that Americans don't want to do. To which some, including much of organized labor, say that, if so many immigrants weren't here, Americans would do the same work, at higher wages and with benefits. I rather doubt it. In times of prosperity, such as the present, unemployment among American citizens is practically non-existent. (The official and very low unemployment figure includes a majority of people who are voluntarily between jobs or simply taking time off from work.) Very few Americans are lining up to wash dishes, mop floors, or deliver pizza. The economy and everyday life of New York and other cities would grind to a near halt in the absence of Hispanic immigrants. Not to mention what would happen to the vast agricultural enterprises of California and other states.

It is hard to argue with Andrew Ferguson, who writes: "Restricting that flow of willing workers would cause an economic calamity that no federal official will seriously contemplate. Nor would anyone in a position of responsibility pretend it is plausible to round up the 11 million illegal immigrants who are already in the U.S., ship them back to their homelands and then seal the border against their otherwise inevitable return."

The three parts of the Bush proposal are to secure the border, establish something like a "guest worker" program, and then give those who participate in the program an easier way to become U.S. citizens, once they have completed the terms of the program and returned to their native country. Whatever the details worked out by Congress, opponents are likely to attack the proposal as a gussied-up "amnesty" for illegals. When the great majority of immigrants speak the same language, Spanish, we are inevitably on the way to becoming a bilingual society, critics say. They note, with considerable justice, that the history of societies divided by language and culture is not a happy one. They point out, in addition, that many immigrants, Mexicans in particular, do not want to be citizens. They are here only to take advantage of opportunities for work, along with social and educational benefits. They are, in effect, cross-border commuters. Other Mexicans make no secret of their aim to reconquer the vast territories stolen by the Yanqui imperialists.

True Faith and Allegiance

To prepare for the debate that is heating up, a helpful primer is *True Faith and Allegiance: Immigration and American Civic Nationalism*. The title of the book is, of course, from the oath of allegiance taken by new citizens, and the author is Noah Pickus, who teaches ethics and public policy at Duke University. The value of the book is not so much in the specific policies proposed—Pickus is careful, sometimes almost annoyingly careful, not to seem partisan—as in its providing a history of American immigration policies and a taxonomy of current positions on what should be done. With respect to the latter, it is something like the aforementioned scorecard.

"Civic nationalism" is the idea around which Pickus thinks most of us can rally. "It offers," he says, "our best chance to incorporate immigrants, sustain a robust American nationalism, and foster a meaningful democratic form of citizenship." Pickus does not blithely assume national myths, such as the notion that we are and always have been a "nation of immigrants." He refers to Huntington only in passing, but Huntington's presence is close at hand throughout the book. Huntington is withering in debunking the "nation of immigrants" myth, and Pickus knows that Huntington is right in contending that there is another way of thinking about what it means to be an American, and that that other way still has considerable salience.

John Jay, for instance, wrote in the second of the *Federalist Papers*: "Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in manners and customs." The venerable Benjamin Franklin was not at all happy with so many Germans and Dutch in Pennsylvania: "Why should *Pennsylvania*, founded by the *English*, become a colony of *Aliens*, who will shortly be so numerous as

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to Germanize us instead of [our] Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion?"

That sounds today like raw nativism and chauvinism. A hero in the Pickus account is Theodore Roosevelt who, while welcoming immigrants, was adamant that they conform to the given American type. There was no room for "hyphenated Americans"—German-Americans, Italian-Americans, Polish-Americans, *et al.* There is room only for those who are prepared to be Americans, period. After World War I, following decades of massive immigration, the nation was in a mood for a pause, just as today some urge that, after decades of even more massive immigration, we need a pause to assimilate people already here.

In the 1920s, the Americanization movement often turned virulently anti-immigration, and leading liberals joined in deploring a social experiment that had ended up with too many who were too different. In 1921, John Dewey said, "The simple fact of the case is that at present the world is not sufficiently civilized to permit close contact of people of widely different cultures without deplorable consequences."

Today, says Pickus, the debate about immigration is largely about different ideas of what it means to be a citizen. There are, he says, four ideas of citizenship in contention: immigrant rights, minority representation, cultural nationalism, and universal nationalism. The first need not involve citizenship at all. It champions the rights of immigrants simply because they are here. The second involves citizenship only to the degree that it is necessary to participate in political and other activities aimed at building coalitions and advancing multicultural policies in order to achieve equal rights and representation for minorities. The third understands citizenship to be a matter of being deeply embedded in a culture that is identifiably American. The fourth—sometimes invoking the idea that America is the first "universal nation"—views citizenship as a matter more of consent than culture. One becomes a citizen by agreeing to abide by the American political "creed" as embodied in the ideals and institutions of the founding.

In contradiction to the first two ideas of citizenship, and in contrast to the second two, Pickus calls for "a new civic nationalism." His approach is more irenic than polemical, and his proposed alternative therefore takes on the appearance at times of being a melange of conflicting ideas in play. "Today," writes Pickus, "Americans face the difficult task of sustaining a civic nation in the absence of a dominant culture, ethnic identity, or consensus on the meaning of constitutional values. These absences make the challenge of forging unity out of diversity even more difficult than at the Founding or in the Progressive Era. Yet Americans possess something that was missing from those periods—a real history [quoting David Hollinger] 'a record of specific tragedies, successes, failures, contradictions, and provincial conceits.'"

In sum, we are bound together by a history of muddling through and may reasonably hope that we can continue to muddle through. After all the discussion of history, principles, and diverse schools of thought, Pickus is inclined to expect more of the same. "It remains unclear, however, whether any fundamental changes will occur in U.S. policy regarding the numbers and origins of immigrants seeking entry to the country, their rights and benefits once admitted, and the requirements governing access to citizenship."

This may seem like a limp response to the alarums raised by Huntington's *Who Are We?* or Victor Davis Hanson's *Mexifornia.* But there are obviously those who think it is about the best that can be expected. It would appear that President Bush is not among them. His three-part reform may shake up conventional alliances in Congress and the political class. By virtue of the proposed reform, the border may be somewhat more secure, and the millions of illegals now in the country may see benefits in becoming legal under the guest worker program. Whether that means they will become citizens is another matter. President Vincente Fox of Mexico has said that most Mexicans in the United States are "not going to become American citizens, nor do they want U.S. citizenship. What they are interested in is having their rights respected."

One reason citizenship is not the prize it once was is the growth in the number of official and *de facto* dual citizens, and even multiple citizens. Also among the elite leaders of globalization, it is increasingly common for people to carry the passports of two or more nations. At the bottom and at the top of the economic hierarchy, more and more people are Americans when it is convenient. It is far from clear how the White House or Congress will address that problem, if indeed it is seen as a problem.

Noah Pickus' case for civic nationalism is brimming over with intelligence and good will, but one is left with the distinct impression that "true faith and allegiance" is not likely to mean in the future what it meant in the past according to the mythology of this "nation of immigrants." As long as there is a steady flow of workers and parishioners, the editors of the Wall Street Journal and the bishops of the Catholic Church will probably not be losing any sleep over

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that prospect. Many others, however, will regret the passing of the day when they thought they more or less knew what it meant to be an American.

While We're At It

■ On the First Things website and elsewhere, there has been a lively discussion about Wheaton College dismissing a faculty member who became Catholic because, said the college president, he could not, as a Catholic, honestly subscribe to the school's doctrinal statement on the authority of Scripture. The faculty member said he could. The incident came to public attention through a story in the *Wall Street Journal* and our Joseph Bottum took a somewhat benign view of the matter, underscoring the importance of a Christian school being serious about what it believes. There is a great deal to be said for that, but, as others, including some Wheaton faculty, have pointed out, the dismissal may also be seen as an evangelical Protestant insecurity that prevents intellectual engagement with the diversity within the Christian tradition. Even the most seriously Catholic of Catholic colleges, for instance, would not exclude evangelical Protestants from the faculty. You can't get much more seriously Catholic than, say, Ave Maria University in Naples, Florida, which boasts of the presence of Rabbi David Dalin. As I had occasion to write in connection with the bold (albeit imperiled) experiment at Baylor University, a Jew who believes in the mission of a determinedly Christian institution makes a much more important contribution than the most devout Christian who doesn't believe in that mission. And there is another set of questions raised by the Wheaton incident. Who is an evangelical? Should Wheaton be Reformed, including the Westminster Confession in its doctrinal statement? And how about Arminians, Dispensationalists, or those who hold to the teaching of total depravity? Then there are evangelicals who believe in the effective grace of infant baptism, and others who don't. Apparently, Wheaton wants to be broad enough to include all Protestants who call themselves evangelical, no matter the conflicts and contradictions among those who hold to what is called the Reformation tradition, but narrow enough to exclude Roman Catholics—who make up more than half of all the Christians in the world. Or isn't the difference between Arminian free-will and Calvinist predestination all that important, after all? The president of Wheaton, Duane Litfin, says that Catholic and Protestant claims "reflect alternate answers to the question of authority in the church. These answers in turn dictate most of the other Catholic/Protestant differences." It is, he says, a matter of *sola scriptura* (Protestant) or Scripture and tradition (Catholic). This, I am afraid, doesn't quite work and never has. Notable heresies of Christian history—Arianism, Docetism, Monophysitism, Nestorianism, Tritheism—appealed earnestly to the supreme authority of Scripture without reference to what Catholics understand as tradition and magisterial teaching authority. Apparently an Arian, who denies that Jesus is true God and true man, would pose no problem for Wheaton, as long as he appealed to "Scripture alone" as the authority for his beliefs. In fact, there are evangelical theologians who promote "open theism," which denies the omniscience of God, and are adamant in their devotion to *sola scriptura*. "The Roman Catholic Church stands in this great magisterial tradition, a tradition from which Protestantism has from the outset dissented," writes Dr. Litfin. The college, he writes, "intends this reference to Scripture's 'supreme and final authority' to be read as an historic dissent" from Catholic claims. Dr. Litfin thus lends credibility to the claim that the identity of evangelicalism rests on a double negative: Evangelicals are Christians who are not Catholic and not liberal Protestants. If you are not Catholic and not a liberal, presumably anything goes. And, if anything goes, it is not clear why the theologically liberal should be excluded—as long as they appeal to Scripture as the "supreme and final authority" for their liberalism. Dr. Litfin appeals to "Reformation distinctives" as being somehow normative. Another term for Reformation distinctives or "the Reformation heritage" is the Reformation *tradition*. Thus does it become evident that the dispute is not over *sola scriptura*, on the one hand, and Scripture and tradition, on the other. The dispute is over which tradition is normative; one that interprets Scripture in continuity with a tradition that extends from the apostolic era to the present, or one that interprets Scripture according to a tradition, riddled with internal contradictions, that began in the sixteenth century. The one thing that everybody in the second tradition had in common then was anti-Catholicism. Wheaton's decision to dismiss a highly respected faculty member because he became Catholic may understandably lead some to think that not much has changed.

■ Among those taken in was the prestigious magazine *Science*, with the media leading the chorus of global acclaim. It went on for months and months. Then it

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turned out that Hwang Woo Suk, the South Korean scientist, was forced to admit that he had faked the evidence for his cloning experiments and related discoveries. In an interview, Dr. Leon Kass of the University of Chicago, who has recently stepped down as chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics and is famous for choosing his words with care, put it this way: "Scientific fraud is always revolting, but it is fortunately rare, and, in the end, truth will out. But in this case, American scientists and the American media have been complicit in the fraud, because of their zeal in the politics of stem-cell and cloning research and their hostility to the Bush funding policy. Concerted efforts have been made these past five years to hype therapeutic cloning, including irresponsible promises of cures around the corner and 'personalized repair kits' for every degenerative disease." The media and the large part of the scientific establishment were "complicit in the fraud." So eager were they to puff the high promise of, among other things, embryonic stem cell research, so determined were they to ignore the proven rewards of employing adult stem cells, and so exultant were they in scoring points off the Bush administration, that the usual cautions were thrown to the winds in announcing a great scientific breakthrough and cruelly raising the hopes of those who suffer from sundry diseases that a cure was at hand. Kass said, "The need to support these wild claims and the desire to embarrass cloning opponents led to the accelerated publication of Dr. Hwang's 'findings.' . . . We even made him Exhibit A for the false claim that our moral scruples are causing American science to fall behind." The technological imperative—that if something can be done, it must be done—operates by the motto *Full steam ahead, and morality be damned.* Of course, it is not usually put that bluntly. The denigration of moral "scruples"—the word sounds so old-maidish—is thinly veiled by the hiring of the best bioethicists that money can buy. They can be counted on to issue permission slips for whatever ambitious scientists want to do. To be sure, not all scientists are unscrupulous, but the imperative to push the envelope is built into the system. Before he went down in ignominy, Dr. Hwang was an international celebrity and the darling son of South Korea. It is reported that a postage stamp was issued in his honor. Whatever their interest in philately, every researcher involved in fields related to Hwang's fraud should keep an enlarged copy framed in the laboratory. Others might be sent to top editors and executives of the world's media. Especially sordid in this case was the eagerness with which Hwang's "findings" were embraced for crassly political purposes. Such incidents should not be forgotten as yesterday's news. "Hwanging" deserves a permanent place in our vocabulary, referring to the many instances in which dubious or fictional scientific advances are invoked in order to create a simulacrum of inevitably about the abandonment of moral reason. This instance of Hwanging was not the work of one man. It was the result of an ideologically driven scientific-media complex that, if unchecked, will continue to pit science against morality, with the likely and unhappy result of bringing science into popular disrepute. Complicity is the right word.

■ In my reflection on "The Truce of 2005" in the February issue, at least a few readers thought I gave excessive attention to the role of Jesuits in the widespread resistance to, or rejection of, the November instruction from Rome on gays and the priesthood. I am sensitive to the criticism, but really must plead innocent. The Society of Jesus has been conspicuous in throwing down the gauntlet in defiance of the Church's teaching on homosexuality. It will be recalled that the November instruction declared that the Church "cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies, or support the so-called gay culture." I cited a number of Jesuits who could hardly have been more explicit in their disagreement. At the time I wrote, *America*, the official Jesuit weekly, had not spoken editorially on the instruction. A measure of caution and delay is understandable. *America* had just been through a rough patch in its relations with Rome, resulting in the dismissal of its former editor, Father Thomas Reese. The Jesuit response to the November instruction would have to be carefully considered, and there is reason to believe that this involved consultation within the leadership circles of the society. It is possible that some leaders counseled caution, or even support for the directive from Rome. Other influential Jesuits, however, very publicly dissent from the Church's teaching that homosexual acts are morally wrong and that homosexual desires are therefore morally disordered. Some of the dissenters have very openly declared themselves to be gay. In any event, the *America* editorial finally appeared, and it is obvious that the counsel of caution, never mind obedience, was rejected. The editorial praises the "excellent priests" who are gay, cautions against animosity toward gays, and urges that priests be "prudent" in their involvement with the gay culture. The key passage is this: "There is a valid concern that the priesthood should not become exclusively or even predominantly the domain of gay men. In the same way that one would not want to see all or most priests coming from a particular ethnic group, or from a par-

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ticular region of a country, one hopes that the priesthood reflects the great diversity of Catholics." So the official position of the Society of Jesus in the United States, insofar as it is represented by the society's magazine, is that homosexuality is no more morally problematic than ethnic or geographical origins. The November instruction makes careful distinctions with respect to homosexual acts and tendencies. *America* conflates these distinctions in the word "gay," using the term as it is ordinarily used to refer to a person who engages in homosexual acts, has predominantly or exclusively same-sex desires, elects to identify himself as gay, and supports the gay culture. Rome says that men with deep-seated homosexual tendencies must not be admitted to the priesthood. *America* counters by saying that those who have such tendencies, act upon such tendencies—and embrace such tendencies and actions as constituting their identity—make excellent priests. Rome says that homosexual acts are intrinsically immoral and the desire to commit them is objectively disordered. *America* says such acts and desires are comparable to being Irish or Latino, or to being born in Texas or Wisconsin. Rome says gay men must not be admitted to the priesthood. *America* says there is a valid concern that the priesthood not be composed predominantly or exclusively of gay men. I confess that I do not how to construe the editorial position of *America*, the official weekly magazine of the Society of Jesus, as anything other than an in-your-face rejection of the instruction from Rome, issued by the explicit authority of the pope, and of the magisterial teaching on which the instruction is based. In the absence of a vigorous and visible response from Rome, it would seem that we are confronted by a "Truce of 2005" comparable to the "Truce of 1968" with respect to orchestrated dissent from the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. If that is the case, and we must pray it is not, it is difficult to overestimate the grave consequences for the effective leadership of the still-young pontificate of Benedict XVI.

■ We had hoped by now to have a review of Raymond Arroyo's bestselling book *Mother Angelica* (Doubleday, 400 pages, $23.95), but that didn't pan out. I won't bore you with the details. The book should not go unremarked here. It is a great read, and I recommend it to your attention. Born Rita Rizzo in Canton, Ohio, in 1923, the woman who became Mother Angelica is the product of a family that redefines dysfunctional. She was restlessly energetic in a dozen directions, not least in her sense of a world riddled through and through with the reality of miracles. Had current practices prevailed then, she might have been put on Prozac, and there would be no Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), no Our Lady of the Angels Monastery, and fewer of the stirrings of vibrant (and sometimes wacky) orthodoxy embraced by her millions of fans. The entire book is a lively read, but I found most particularly fascinating Arroyo's account of the Catholic piety and practices of her formative years. This was a world of Catholicism that deserves to be remembered with honor. It cannot be reconstituted in most of its historical particulars, but there is much there that can be revived and revised for our time. (Rita Rizzo was on my mind when I was writing parts of my new book, *Catholic Matters*.) Moreover, *Mother Angelica* is a deft introduction to aspects of the politics of the Church in this country, as bishops variously tried to control, co-opt, silence, or displace this remarkable woman. All to no avail, as to no avail was their multi-million-dollar effort to establish a competing Catholic network. Roger Cardinal Mahony of Los Angeles earned himself a major role in Arroyo's account of episcopal ineptitude and pettiness. It is to Arroyo's credit that he seeks, even strains, to be kind. Working at EWTN, he had years of one-on-one interviews with Mother Angelica, in which she insisted that he tell her life and work with no embellishments. For such a life and work, embellishment is superfluous. Mother Angelica is an important part of the history of religion—and not only of Catholicism—in the last half century, and in *Mother Angelica* she receives a critical appreciation worthy of her person and achievements.

■ A noted professor of English recently wrote an essay on the true meaning of conservatism in which he opined that the unlimited abortion license imposed by *Roe* should be accepted as a permanent fact of life. In the course of his argument he said, "Such use of language as 'unborn child' does not advance analysis." Stephen Barr, a frequent contributor to these pages, dropped me this note: "I'd like to hear from this professor of English what is wrong with English. Surely Prof. Hart must know the etymology and meaning of the word 'child.' I find in my old Webster's that it comes from Old English 'cild' and the Gothic words 'kilthei' (womb) and 'inkiltko' (pregnant), and the first definition of 'child' given is 'unborn or recently born person.' Pregnant women are traditionally said to be 'with child.' It is touching to see how humanists stand in such awe of the way scientists talk. When we speak of electrons, and entropy, and momentum, and equations, let's use Greek and Latin. (What *was* the Anglo-Saxon word for electron anyway?) But, please, Professor, when it comes to mothers, fathers, and children, let's speak English."

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■ As mentioned before in these pages, Loyola Press is doing a very good thing by bringing out in handsome paperback format a number of staples in the Catholic literary tradition, appropriately titled "The Loyola Classics Series," under the general editorship of Amy Welborn. Among them are *The Devil's Advocate* by Morris West, *The Edge of Sadness* by Edwin O'Connor, *Helena* by Evelyn Waugh, *The Last Catholic in America* by John R. Powers, and *Saint Francis* by Nikos Kazantzakis. Each volume carries a new introduction by a contemporary writer, and that's where I noticed an odd thing. I recently had the excellent company of *The Edge of Sadness* on a long flight. Edwin O'Connor is best known for *The Last Hurrah*, an agreeably sentimental account of the last years of the Irish Catholic political establishment in Boston. His latter novel, *The Edge of Sadness*, published in 1961, won a Pulitzer Prize. The story is told by Father Hugh Kennedy, a recovering alcoholic, and turns around the character of Charlie Carmody, a humorously mean-spirited octogenarian who made his pile as a slumlord. His zest for life is in tyrannizing all around him, beginning with his family. But here's the odd thing: In his introduction, Ron Hansen notes the "intensely honest and unsentimental perspective that gives resonance to Edwin O'Connor's novel even today." The key words are "even today." In this and other introductions in the series, the sharp contrast is drawn between the Catholicism prior to the Second Vatican Council and the Catholicism of what came after. An elegiac note is struck about what once was and will never be again. The books are frequently recommended as interesting period pieces that should not be ignored "even today." There is a defensive tone that one would not expect in the recommending of literature that is confidently thought to be of lasting consequence. Edith Wharton writes of a New York society that is long gone, as Melville writes of a vanished life at sea, but nobody would think of saying that they are worth reading "even today." I doubt if that would be said of Willa Cather's *Death Comes to the Archbishop*. But there is the feel in the Loyola Classics that these books have been retrieved from the dustbin of an insular and parochial world, and that world has to be explained to readers if they are to understand why these books were once thought to be worth reading. That is, I believe, quite unfair to most of the books in question. They stand on their own as quality literature. Their neglect is due to changing literary fashions, influenced in part by Catholics who are eager to forget—or to remember only to pillory—the "pre-Vatican II Church." A wag recently remarked that the greatest Catholic contribution to literature in recent decades is the production of so many ex-Catholic writers. There is something to that. It was not always so. Today there are hints of a possible revival in Catholic literature. One thinks, for instance, of Matthew Lickona's *Swimming with Scapulars: True Confessions of a Young Catholic*. But the hints are few and far between. Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, and a host of others write unabashedly Jewish novels, and there are about thirteen times more Catholics than Jews in America. Perhaps the eclipse of Catholic literature can be attributed to a sensed loss of "apartness" that is still the inspiration, and burden, of Jews. Lickona's fetching story is very much that of a traditionalist who stands apart from a Catholicism that has made its peace with the American Way. I expect the truth is that most non-Catholic Americans, unlike Catholics who assume their unqualified cultural assimilation, still view Catholicism as something strange, even exotic. That is evident in the continuing flow of novels and plays of a distinctly anti-Catholic bent, usually written by ex-Catholics. But now there are no Catholics of the stature of J.F. Powers or Edwin O'Connor writing from within the Catholic experience. FIRST THINGS' own junior fellow Mary Ruiz has joined with others to help that happen. They have launched *Dappled Things*, an online literary magazine for young Catholics that is trolling for talent. Years from now an Edwin O'Connor may look back and recall how he got his start with *Dappled Things*. Meanwhile, we are indebted to Loyola Press for making available again books such as *The Edge of Sadness* which are splendid reading anytime, and not "even today."

■ Greenwood Press is publishing an interesting series for classroom use on various religions under the generic title "The American Religious Experience." There are, for instance, the Buddhist, African-American, Protestant, and Muslim experiences in America. And now there is *The Catholic Experience in America* by sociologist Joseph A. Varacalli. The book provides an informed overview of Catholic history in this country, with particular attention to controversies and conflicts since the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s. The final chapter, "What Lies Ahead?," charts possible scenarios for the future of Catholicism in this country: 1) dissolution; 2) an "American" Church; 3) sect-like retreat; 4) neo-orthodoxy; 5) formal schism; and 6) "pluralism." Although he doesn't come right out and say so, Varacalli clearly favors number 4, which he identifies with the vision of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Protecting his reputation as a social scientist, he doesn't lay odds on which is most likely to prevail. Since I am free from that professional inhibition, I venture that the serious contest is between

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numbers 2, 4, and 6. In this case, "pluralism" (note the quotation marks) means an increasingly dispirited status quo in which Catholicism is a loosely associated amalgam of accommodations to spiritual consumerism. In my book *Catholic Matters*, published this February by Basic Books, I discuss these possibilities in terms of whether the accent is placed on being "American Catholics" or "Catholic Americans," pointing out how the adjective tends to control the noun. Varacalli's typology is suggestive, however, and *The Catholic Experience in America* warrants a close look by high school and college teachers, and by others curious about the past, present, and future of Catholicism in this country.

■ I don't know if a rant is on the far side of a tirade, or vice versa. But, whatever term one prefers, the *New Republic* gave Alan Wolfe of Boston College seven pages to attack Rodney Stark's recent volume, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*. "*The Victory of Reason,*" writes Wolfe, "is the worst book by a social scientist that I have ever read." "Rodney Stark writes in an age of reason to advance the cause of prejudice." Faiths other than Christianity "made their contributions to reason as well. Wise people know this: blowhards and bigots do not." "Stark owes more to Lenin than to [Max] Weber; agitprop, disdain, perfect certainty—all the Marxist arsenal is here, deployed not on behalf of class struggle but in the name of religious sectarianism." You can see that Wolfe does not like the book at all. Oh, yes, if I understand Wolfe correctly, Stark is also guilty of anti-Semitism. Along the way of Wolfe's assault there are stunning gaffes. He has the Spanish Inquisition condemning Galileo, and invokes Charles Freeman as his authority for the claim that St. Paul was a fanatical enemy of reason. "It was only later," writes Wolfe, "most strikingly in the writings of Augustine and Aquinas that Christian theologians began to make their peace with reason." So much for Origen, the Gregories, Basil, Irenaeus, and a host of others whom the Church calls "Fathers." Driving Alan Wolfe's rage against Rodney Stark's book, I expect, is his animus against the particularity of religion as it is believed and lived. As has been noted before in this space, Wolfe is a student of "religion in general" and is impatient with the commitment of others to religions in particular. Believers are right in thinking that religion is neglected in the academy but, says Wolfe, "the real problem is that most believers do not believe in religion. They believe in Christianity or Judaism or Islam or Hinduism or Buddhism—in a specific faith." Alan Wolfe believes in religion, or at least he believes that religion is interesting. He nicely sums up the controlling claim that informs all his work: "Advocating religion over secularism runs the risk of dismissing secularists; advocating one religion over all the others degrades every believer who does not believe what you do." Of course, that can be neatly turned around: Advocating secularism over religion runs the risk of dismissing believers; advocating that all religions are more or less equal degrades what the believer in any religion believes. Alan Wolfe to the extreme contrary, Rodney Stark's *The Victory of Reason* is an important book, and I am glad to see it has been receiving respectful reviews in places of influence. I have a blurb on the book's dust jacket saying that it not only provides fresh answers but also frames old questions in a new way. Stark is bold, even swashbuckling at times, and there are generalizations that cry out for qualification. But *The Victory of Reason* is, all in all, a bracing intellectual and historical exercise, and it will be receiving further attention in these pages.

■ "Think low." That is the advice that Midge Decter has had occasion to give me many times over the years. She's right. My problem (well, among my many problems) is that, when somebody does or says something really dumb, I assume it is a failure of understanding and they just need to have the matter explained to them. I am averse to looking for ulterior motives, especially pecuniary motives. Part of that is charity and part of it is, I suppose, naiveté. "Think low" is closely related to "Follow the dollar." All this was brought to mind by readers who said they greatly appreciated my critique of the *New American Bible* (NAB), but then added that I had overlooked the money factor. "The Catholic Biblical Association is surely at fault for so much that is wrong with the NAB," writes a reader who is in a position to know, "but the reason that abominable translation is foisted on the faithful at Mass has more to do with the budget of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops" (NCCB). There is undoubtedly more than a little to that. A number of companies supply the Mass guides (called, ugh, "missalettes") that are used in every Catholic parish, and that is a multi-million-dollar business. Unlike those who hold the copyright to the Revised Standard Version and allow it to be used at little or no charge, the NCCB charges an arm and a leg for the use of NAB. Mandating that the suppliers of Mass guides use the NAB is a major source of income for the bishops. Interestingly enough, in its own publications the NCCB tends not to use the NAB. Presumably because they don't want a third-rate translation, and also because there is little point in paying exorbitant fees to themselves by using the NAB. So it is, for example, that the *Catechism of the Catholic*

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Church and the more recent *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* use the Revised Standard Version. The NAB, on the other hand, is good enough for the people at Mass. Plus, there is all that money from the publishers of Mass guides. I really do not like to think low, but sometimes explanations are less than edifying.

■ Kevin Seamus Hasson is the feisty founder of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, an organization that is to be found in the forefront of battles over religion in the public square. He has now written an irenically assertive book, *The Right to be Wrong: Ending the Culture War Over Religion in America* (Encounter, 159 pages, $25.95), which includes this: "Writ large, that is the solution to the culture war. Respect for others' consciences, even when we're sure they are wrong, is contagious. Not because it's nice. (In fact, the postmodern consensus seems to be that it's *not* nice to call anybody wrong.) Rather, it's contagious because it conveys an important idea: Whether it's a tradition as old and venerable as Buddhism or as new and flaky as parking-barrier worship doesn't matter. Because of how we're made, we are each free—within broad limits—to follow what we believe to be true in the manner that our consciences say we must. That is, we are free to celebrate our beliefs in public and try respectfully to persuade others of them. We are free, ultimately, to organize our entire lives around them." I doubt the book will end the culture war over religion, but it does—by way of clear argument, whimsy, and revealing anecdotes—make a powerful case countering the conventional pitting of truth against tolerance. It is respect for the dignity of the person, who is inseparable from what he holds to be true, that is the surest foundation of an authentically pluralistic society. My friend Seamus is sometimes pugnacious, but he is never nasty. He is undisguisedly impatient with bigots who claim to be offended by the existence of beliefs other than their own.

■ Of major newspapers, none has an editorial page as generally sensible as that of the *Wall Street Journal*. But then there is this: "Churchill might wonder at today's attitudes toward fighting terrorists, about American 'torture' of prisoners, and about the U.S. President who's often derided in London as a 'cowboy.' The British Prime Minister's clarity about the Nazi threat in World War II got his nation and the world successfully through that conflict." No one should doubt that Churchill was a great historical figure and that his cause was our cause and that cause was just. But the man was also possessed of a deeply shadowed side. In addition to condoning the reprisal killings of civilians, Churchill is also supposed to have said of the obliteration bombing of cities such as Hamburg and Dresden, "Bomb and bomb until you're bouncing the rubble." This is barbarism of a low order, and the fact that it was waged against barbarism of a lower order does not mitigate the abandonment of the moral order upon which civilization depends. Just as casually, many people, including many Christians, have accepted the intrinsically evil bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima as justified by the assumed shortening of the war. In the current discussions of the Iraq war, torture, and concern about surveillance and civil liberties, much of the protest is wimpish or motivated by rank political partisanship. As the generally sensible editorial writers of the *Wall Street Journal* should know, however, the choice is not between being a wimp or being a thug.

■ Christina Page works for NARAL, one of the more strident pro-abortion lobbies, and she has published a book titled *How the Pro-Choice Movement Saved America*. The book, according to *Publishers Weekly*, is directed against fundamentalists and their "procreationist ideology and animus toward sexual pleasure itself." Catholics get their whacks for "attacking feminism and premarital sex." *Publishers Weekly* quotes Page, who writes, "regular sex brings people as much happiness as a $50,000-a-year raise." Really? A raise is defined as an increment of a salary received. If one is getting paid, say, $100,000 and gets a $50,000 raise, that is a very big increment. The thing that struck me is that I know evangelical Christian and young Catholic couples who are living the "theology of the body" and I expect they would say that their sexual relationship is worth much more than that. I inquired, and one such young woman looked incredulous. "I couldn't dream of putting a price tag on it," she said. Despite the evil of the cause she promotes, one must feel very sorry for Christina Page.

■ A few months after the attacks of September 11, 2001, on New York and Washington, sixty American intellectuals, including some closely associated with First Things, issued a detailed document, "What We're Fighting For: A Letter from America." (Although I was supportive of the initiative, I finally decided not to sign.) The document received slight attention in this country, but in the following months sparked strong responses and responses to responses in the Middle East and Europe. Now all these exchanges have been put together in an extremely interesting book, *The Islam/West Debate: Documents from a Global Debate on Terrorism, U.S. Policy, and the Middle East*, edited by David Blankenhorn and others (Rowman & Littlefield, 299 pages, $27.95).

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Gathered here in one place is a remarkably comprehensive display of the clashes—some strident, some more thoughtful—over "the clash of civilizations." There is no substitute for listening to both friends and enemies having their say in their own words. Following September 11, the question was frequently asked, "Why do they hate us so?" *The Islam/West Debate* is a good place to find out. But be warned that finding out will not necessarily, will not probably, result in greater hopefulness about alleviating disagreements.

■ *The Islam/West Debate* includes a "Letter to the American People" that is attributed to Osama bin Ladin. Those who question whether he wrote it personally agree that it accurately represents the views of al-Quaeda. In the editorial introduction to the book, it is said that this and other Islamist statements "may be understood as objecting not to U.S. policy per se, but U.S. policy insofar as it is an impediment to the goals of Islamism. Indeed, in the letters, complaints about U.S. policy are woven into a larger argument for the global hegemony of Islam; the eventual 'rapprochement' between the West and Islam is contingent upon the adoption of the latter by the former." The "Letter to the American People" begins with an account of U.S. offenses against Islam and a defense of September 11 and other attacks. Then the question is asked, "What are we calling you to, and what do we want from you?" The answer begins with this:

> The first thing we are calling you to is Islam. The religion of the Unification of God; of the freedom from associating partners with Him, and rejection of this; of complete love of Him, the Exalted; of complete submission to His Laws; and of the discarding of all the opinions, orders, theories and religions which contradict the religion He sent down to His Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Islam is the religion of all the Prophets, and makes no distinction between them—peace be upon them all. It is to this religion that we call you; the seal of all the previous religions. It is the religion of Unification of God, sincerity, the best of manners, righteousness, mercy, honor, purity, and piety. It is the religion of showing kindness to others, establishing justice between them, granting them rights, and defending the oppressed and the persecuted. It is the religion of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil with the hand, tongue and heart. It is the religion of jihad in the way of Allah so that Allah's Word and religion reign Supreme. And it is the religion of unity and agreement on the obedience to Allah, and total equality between all people, without regarding their colour, sex, or language. It is the religion whose book—Qur'an—will remain preserved and unchanged, after the other Divine books and messages have been changed. The Qur'an is the miracle until the Day of Judgment. Allah has challenged anyone to bring a book like the Qur'an or even ten verses like it.

The question, of course, is how pervasive in the Muslim world is the radical Islamism of al-Quaeda and others. The book includes more moderate Muslim voices contending that common ground with the West can be found. It also includes Muslim attacks on such moderates, one of which is colorfully titled, "Please Prostrate Yourselves Privately." For a sense of having a front-row seat in listening to the contentions over the clash of civilizations, there is nothing quite like *The Islam/West Debate*.

■ It seemed like an improbable observance for advancing Christian-Muslim dialogue. The occasion was the fifth centenary of the birth of Saint Pius V, and the conference was sponsored by the Pontifical Lateran University, with secretary of state Angelo Cardinal Sodano presiding. There was a presentation by Bishop Walter Brandmüller, president of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences, who noted that "the celebration of the fifth centenary of the birth of Pius V was a bit muted, especially in academic circles." He is surely right about that. It was nowhere to be found, for example, on the program of this year's meeting of the American Academy of Religion. Said Brandmüller, "The victor of Lepanto in 1571, this pope who had the courage and the energy to construct an alliance of almost all the Christian kingdoms against the Ottoman empire—which was advancing to threaten Europe and had already established dominion over the Balkans—today, precisely because of the unhappy restoration of hostility between the two worlds—one formerly Christian, and to a certain extent still Christian, and the other Muslim—seems to many to be an obstructing presence best left in the shadows." It is undoubtedly true that few Muslims celebrate Lepanto or recognize its promise as a symbol for the future of Muslim-Christian relations. Bradmüller recounted the long history of the oppression of non-Muslims, especially Christians and Jews, in Muslim lands and observed, "If this characterization of Islam is destined to remain unchanged in the future, as it has been until now, the only possible outcome is a difficult coexistence with those who do not belong to the Muslim community." As for the current situation in Europe, he concluded, "We must also recognize the natural right of every society to defend its own cultural, religious, and political identity. It seems to me that this is precisely what Pius V did." Some observers say they note a new candor in the pontifi-

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cate of Benedict XVI regarding the challenges posed by Islam. It is unlikely, however, that there will anytime soon be a Pius V chair at Georgetown University's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding.

■ In liturgical worship, you either surrender yourself to the exploration of the unknown or are critically alert to whatever may happen next. That's what rules and rituals are for, and that's why it is so disedifying when priests take liberties with them. A reader says he recently attended the Red Mass at Villanova University and left less than edified. The Red Mass is the occasion for a big annual bash, and is of special importance to the university's law school. Villanova is run by the Augustinians and, of the more than sixty priests there, only one showed up for the occasion. Our friend was most particularly put off by the notice in the glossy program that "Roman Catholic assemblies celebrate the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist and the communal body." Well yes, Christ, being Lord of all, is truly present in the people present, as he is truly present everywhere. But that is not what the Catholic Church means by the Real Presence (upper case). And then there is the statement of the liturgy committee of Villanova, "Postures During Eucharistic Liturgy." The statement notes, "In general [the General Instruction of the Roman Missal] asks the faithful to kneel during the consecration—but then adds 'unless prevented by lack of space, large numbers, or other reasonable cause.'" The statement then gives Villanova's reasonable causes for preventing anyone from kneeling during the Eucharistic Prayer. For instance, one of the prayers thanks God for counting us worthy to "stand" before Him. (Those Augustinians are such literalists.) Moreover, kneeling induces a "sense of passivity, inferiority, and exaggerated unworthiness." Some might prefer the word "receptivity" to "passivity," but it is true that we sinful human beings are averse to acknowledging our inferiority to God and do not take kindly to any exaggeration of our unworthiness. The statement ends on this note: "In all these decisions the Villanova community favors the spirit of community and mutual affirmation; any competitive and legalistic preference in the matter of liturgical practice tends to be divisive and is not considered helpful to communal celebration." In the spirit of mutual affirmation, unity, and our communal abhorrence of legalism: *You vill not kneel.*

■ Some hard questions were asked by Father Bryan Massingale, professor of theology at Marquette University, at a meeting of Catholic politicians convened by Archbishop Timothy Dolan in Milwaukee. Fr. Massingale's presentation on "Catholic Participation in Political Life" is in many ways an exemplary overview of the connections between moral judgment, political decisions, and the virtue of prudence. The last, as he rightly notes, has to do not with taking the safe and easy course but with wisdom and courage. At the same time, some of the hard questions are not asked or fudged, and his presentation—published in *origins*, which is read by many bishops—could give false comfort to those inclined to the safe, easy, and even pusillanimous course. Fr. Massingale refers to "the decisions by a minority of bishops to deny communion to Catholic politicians who, they say, 'defy' church teaching in their votes on abortion legislation. These actions raised the stakes—and the strains—in the relationship between bishops and Catholic public officials considerably." The "they say" and the quotes around "defy" are curious. And who is responsible for causing the strains between bishops and politicians? The politicians who do indeed defy the Church's teaching or the bishops who attempt to hold such politicians accountable for their positions? In the past, says Massingale, "these disputes have occurred 'in house,' as it were. They were seen as matters of internal church discipline and for the most part were unnoticed by the media and the wider society." But the fact that the media raises a storm over, as Massingale puts it, the prospect "that the votes of Catholic politicians increasingly would be dictated by ecclesiastical authorities" does not change the fact that these are "matters of internal church discipline" and, yes "in house," in the sense of the right ordering of the household of God. Although his message was not accurately transmitted to the bishops at the time, in the summer of 2004, then Cardinal Ratzinger was quite explicit in supporting the position taken by the bishops whom Massingale says are responsible for the strains. The Church is responsible for her internal discipline, especially her sacramental disciple, and for correcting misrepresentations of Catholic teaching in public. In the same issue of *origins* that reports Massingale's remarks, Archbishop Dolan writes about the valuable dialogue that occurred at the meeting, and of course dialogue cannot be too highly praised. Provided it is dialogue that does not fudge the truth. Archbishop Dolan, be it noted, is not known for fudging the truth.

■ Joe Louis, the "Brown Bomber," was a boyhood hero, but I am not a boxing fan. I wonder, however, if *La Civiltà Cattolica* is over-reaching when it says that the moral judgment of boxing must be "gravely and absolutely negative." The Jesuit magazine is vetted by the Secretariat of State and is often understood to

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reflect opinion in the Vatican. Boxing, the article says, violates the commandment, "Do not kill." Boxing is "a form of legalized attempted murder" that has left more than five hundred boxers dead over the last hundred years. How many skiers, mountain climbers, race car drivers, and hockey players have died over the last hundred years? More than five hundred, I suppose, and the rest will be dead in due course. Allowing that boxing may pose more risk to participants than most sports, is it really a form of attempted murder? Another aggravating factor, the magazine says, is that boxing matches often incite sentiments of violence among spectators. That is probably true. One has to ask, however, whether the editorial writer has gauged the sentiments at a Yankees-Red Sox game, not to mention a British football match. Yet another objection is that boxing is controlled by interests "which are often pitiless and cruel, in which the boxer is simply a moneymaking machine." Baseball players have said much the same of George Steinbrenner. Again, I'm not a boxing fan and every human activity has its seamier side, but somehow the activity described by *La Civiltà Cattolica* doesn't quite match the memory of the young Cassius Clay dancing his dance at center ring and taunting all comers with "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee." I don't know who wrote the editorial, but I expect he's one of those people who are simply too sensitive for polite company. It is a comfort to know that editorials in *La Civiltà Cattolica* do not count as magisterial teaching.

■ Oh, dear. My friend Kenneth Woodward is being very mean to my friend Peggy Noonan. Peggy has published a book, *John Paul the Great: Remembering a Spiritual Father* (Viking, 256 pages, $24.95), which Ken trashes in a *New York Times* book review. "In short," writes Woodward, "*John Paul the Great* is as much about Peggy Noonan as it is about the pope." But of course. That, as I have written elsewhere, is the charm of the book. As her subtitle indicates, it is about discovering and remembering a spiritual father. Woodward notes that Noonan quotes me as saying that "the pope believes what the Catholic Church believes, and the Catholic Church believes what the pope believes." I don't remember saying that, but I probably did, and it likely had to do with some specific teaching, in which case it is almost certainly true. Woodward grumbles: "That may be a fair description of how John Paul II sometimes saw himself, but it is not at all how Vatican II understood the Church and the role of the papacy within it." Right you are, Ken. Peggy is not writing a systematic theology, nor does she suggest I was offering a definitive account of Vatican II on the papacy and the Church. Endearing old liberal that he is at heart, Woodward deplores the "glaring omission" of any mention of the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in Peggy's discussion of the "theology of the body." For old liberals, endearing and otherwise, everything goes back to 1968 and *Humanae Vitae*. The omission is glaring "especially for a woman," Woodward writes. Why especially for a woman? Is there a hint of sexism here? I imagine that Peggy assumes that most people, both men and women, know by now that the Catholic Church teaches that artificial contraception violates the unitive and procreative nature of human sexuality. Woodward seems to think that Noonan is hiding a shameful secret. He goes on to say that, "A writer needn't be a cradle Catholic to take the measure of a pope." That comes after he has made rather a point of Noonan not being a cradle Catholic. It was, he says, only in middle age that "she adopted the pope as her 'spiritual father.'" Why, one wonders, does a Catholic put sneer quotes around the idea of spiritual paternity? Ken Woodward is something of an expert on the process by which the Church officially designates people as saints, having written a book on the subject many years ago. He concludes his review by suggesting that Noonan's book is a "pious biography" aimed at advancing the canonization of John Paul II. "I can think of no other rationale for this book," he says. That really makes no sense at all. If, as Woodward says, the book is as much or more about Peggy Noonan as it is about John Paul, it is not likely to be of much interest to the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints. As for other rationales for the book, how about a writer wanting to share the joy of her spiritual discoveries? I'm afraid Ken Woodward wrote his review when he was having a really bad day. I might say that I can think of no other rationale for his review other than that, as a cradle Catholic and expert on saints, he resents Peggy Noonan trespassing on his turf. But I won't say that. Put the review down, rather, to his having a really bad day, and to the fact that he does not think so very highly of John Paul. The former often cannot be helped, and culpability for the latter is mitigated by his having come of Catholic age in the debased excitements of the sixties. Peggy Noonan, on the other hand, had the good fortune to come of Catholic age during the glorious years of John Paul the Great. It really does make a big difference, as a whole generation of younger Catholics (and even some middle-aged Catholics) can testify. And, as in the case of Peggy Noonan, they do testify.

■ Few leaders in the Catholic Church today have a more unenviable position than Sean O'Malley, the

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archbishop of Boston. No large diocese in the country was as devastated by the sex-abuse scandal. Boston, legendary in American Catholic history, is in the grips of deep demoralization and confusion, with huge abuse-related financial settlements, the inevitable controversies attending the closing of parishes, and a relentlessly hostile media dominated by the *Boston Globe*. In this highly charged climate, it required a measure of courage for Archbishop O'Malley to issue a letter on homosexuality that is both pastoral and to the point. In the view of some, and not without reason, the word "pastoral" has come to be equated with wimpish. But of course it connotes a faithful shepherd's concern for those in his care. O'Malley writes: "If we tell people that sex outside of marriage is not a sin, we are deceiving people. If they believe this untruth, a life of virtue becomes all but impossible. Jesus teaches that discipleship implies taking up the cross each day and following Him with love and courage." God created us to be happy, and those who set themselves against the will of God are guaranteed to be unhappy, both here and hereafter. O'Malley continues: "We know that friends and relatives of homosexual Catholics sometimes feel torn between their allegiance to Christ and their concern for their loved ones. I assure them that these goals are not incompatible. As Catholics we profess a firm belief in the dignity of each person and in the eternal destiny to which God calls us. Calling people to embrace the cross of discipleship, to live the commandments and at the same time assuring them that we love them as brothers and sisters can be difficult. Sometimes we are told: 'If you do not accept my behavior, you do not love me.' In reality we must communicate the exact opposite: 'Because we love you, we cannot accept your behavior.' God made us to be happy forever. That true and lasting happiness is accessible only by a path of conversion. Each of us has our own struggles in responding to the call to discipleship and holiness. We are not alone. Christ promised to be with us and has given us His Church and Sacraments to help us on the road." Unlike many who claim to be "reaching out" to those who have chosen a way of life in defiance of God's design and enabling grace, Archbishop O'Malley knows that true love does not hide the truth.

■ Joseph Bottum picked up on an ad in *America*, the Jesuit magazine, for a nine-inch statue of Mary titled "Extra Virgin" and encased in a condom. He remarked on it in a posting on the FIRST THINGS website. It soon became a *cause célèbre*. The British "artist" who placed the ad said it was a splendid lark and made no secret of his intention to mock Catholic teaching and piety. In response to numerous protests, the editors of *America* were terribly embarrassed and said it was all a mistake. They explained that it happened because editors only saw the ad in black and white before it was published, and it did not look so very much like a condom. Or it may be that priests don't know what a condom looks like. "We're Jesuits," explained the magazine's associate editor, Fr. James Martin. "I don't think you could have found anyone in the editors' room who has seen a condom." The ad's mention of Mary being covered in a "veil of latex" failed to register, he said. Right. The editors of *America* live in the cloistered environs of West 56th Street in Manhattan, and, I suppose, are not allowed access to magazines, television, or the Internet. "A condom? What's a condom?" That is one charitable explanation, of sorts, for the "Extra Virgin Mary" ad. Another is that—despite the in-your-face picture and text of the ad—the editors simply were not paying attention. Yes, I suppose it is theoretically possible that somebody thought it would be fun to spice up the usual fare of doctrinal dissent and obfuscation with a little outright blasphemy. But surely we are required to entertain the other explanations offered, such as they are, before thinking any such thing.

■ The very model of a pastoral letter has been issued by Bishop Alvaro Corrada del Rio of Tyler, Texas. It begins with this: "As your bishop and successor of the apostles amongst you, I desire to hand down the *traditio* received from the Lord Jesus and his apostles." He then applies that tradition to the confused question of when children should receive the sacrament of Confirmation. It is confused because, under current rules, bishops are allowed considerable leeway. In some dioceses, Confirmation has become a teenage "rite of passage," or a kind of reward for completing a course of study. Tyler, Texas, is Baptist country. The bishop says of Confirmation: "It is not a human act similar to that of non-Catholic Christians who, perhaps in their early teens, choose to publicly profess that they have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Sacraments are primarily about God choosing and embracing us, not the other way around." He underscores that truth at several points, noting that "sacraments are gifts which we receive and which perfect us, not in any way rights which we have earned or expressions of changes that we ourselves have initiated." Our participation in the sacraments "does not depend on human gifts, talents or age; it depends on truth and love. We can only love because God has first loved us. God conveys his love through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and chief among the instruments he uses are the sacraments of initiation." Note that

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"sacraments of initiation" is in the plural. Holy Baptism is the chief sacrament of initiation and, intimately linked with it in the tradition of both Western and Eastern Christianity, is the sacrament of Confirmation. (In the Orthodox Church, one is baptized and confirmed at the same time.) Thus the bishop directs that the older practice be restored. Confirmation and the first reception of the Eucharist will be at about age eight, preceded by the sacrament of Reconciliation (confession and absolution) at age seven. In addition to my agreeing with Bishop Corrada's directive, what struck me about his pastoral letter is its thoroughly theological approach, informed by attentiveness to the history of teaching and practice, and combined with a keen awareness of pastoral realities. I hope other bishops are reading his letter with care.

■ *USA Today* has its C.S. Lewis experts focused on the Narnia phenomenon: "Lewis, who was an Anglican, is an unlikely hero for evangelicals in some respects. He smoked and drank and lived for thirty years with an older woman who was not his wife." That's one way to describe his keeping his promise to a friend who was killed in World War I that he would care for his mother.

■ Catholic Charities of Boston, headed by Father Bryan Hehir, chose Boston's mayor, Tom Menino, as the honoree for its big annual fundraising dinner. Mr. Menino is pro-abortion and pro-gay marriage. Archbishop O'Malley did not attend the dinner, presumably in protest against the Catholic honor to his honor the mayor. The mayor said, "The Church should teach to the faithful but should not interfere in issues that involve the civil rights of the entire population." He also said, "When the pope speaks on doctrine. that is absolute. I don't think choice and gay marriage are doctrine." The pope says that abortion and gay marriage are doctrine, but that is not absolute because he is speaking about abortion and gay marriage. Or something like that.

■ Egregious displays of arrogance are setting what is aptly called the science establishment upon a self-destructive course. This is again made evident in a national survey conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). There is, of course, the continuing conflict over the teaching of evolution in the schools. Even some adamant opponents of Intelligent Design and other proposals recognize that the derision heaped upon them by Judge John E. Jones III in the Dover, Pennsylvania, trial was a pyrrhic victory. The controversy is composed of a complex mix of science, culture, religion, and politics and is not likely to be resolved by blunderbuss verdicts from the bench on what is and what is not rational. The VCU survey indicates that only 15 percent of the public thinks that only evolution should be taught in public schools, while 73 percent favor teaching also the controversy about evolution. One may be encouraged or depressed by that finding, but in a society in which every establishment must pay its respects to democracy, it is manifest that the scientific elite is failing to persuade. Or consider the fact that for years that establishment, backed almost unanimously by the mainstream media, have insisted on the necessity of embryonic stem cell research, meaning the creation and destruction of human embryos for research purposes. The survey indicates that only 14 percent of Americans think that embryonic stem cell research "holds the greatest promise" for new treatments of diseases. More generally, while 85 percent say developments in science have helped make society better, 56 percent say that "scientific research doesn't pay enough attention to the moral values of society," and 52 percent agree with the statement that "scientific research has created as many problems for society as solutions." We are told that scientists are the gods and goddesses of our culture. Newspapers run stories every day announcing that "Scientific Study Shows _____," "Experts say that _____." It seems an increasing number of the declining number of Americans who still read papers smile a skeptical smile. Since the dawn of the Enlightenment, the solution proposed is that an ignorant populace must be educated. But it has become increasingly evident that much that is called education in science is, in fact, indoctrination in philosophical, moral, and ontological assumptions that most people do not share, and with good reason. Huge enterprises such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, along with science programs in the universities, depend upon public support. It is not good news that so many Americans are suspicious of the scientific enterprise itself. In the Christian perspective, science is a gift of God and the discovery of truth is welcomed and not threatening, since we are confident that all truth is one. All too often, however, what is called science is an admixture of science and alien agendas that reinforces skepticism. Those who command the heights of the scientific establishment must learn to engage the public with a greater measure of humility and candor, recognizing that their credibility depends upon acknowledging that they do not know much more than they do know. People are ready to be taught by teachers they trust. The apparently growing climate of distrust serves neither science nor the public good.

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■ In recent years, theologian Robert Jenson and his wife Blanche have been sending not Christmas but Epiphany cards. With the card comes a poem. For Epiphany 2006, they wrote:

Seekers after truth they were.
Often misguided, to be sure—
I mean—astrology! But then,
One great thing was on their side:
They thought that there was truth to find.
To such faith, light is often given.

■ Was it Aristotle who said that friendships are formed by shared delights? Or maybe our editor was just making it up. In any event, he has this great idea that you might share your delight in FIRST THINGS by sending us names of family members, friends, and associates to whom we can send a sample issue. Mentioning that it was your idea, of course. Reading FIRST THINGS might turn those associates into friends, or at least into better-informed associates. Do send us that list soon. Like maybe today? Please send the names and addresses of those whom you would like to receive a sample copy to FIRST THINGS, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, New York 10010 or by email to *subscriberservices@pma-inc.net*. On the other hand, if they're ready to subscribe, call our toll-free subscription number 1-877-905-9920 or visit our website at *www.firstthings.com*.

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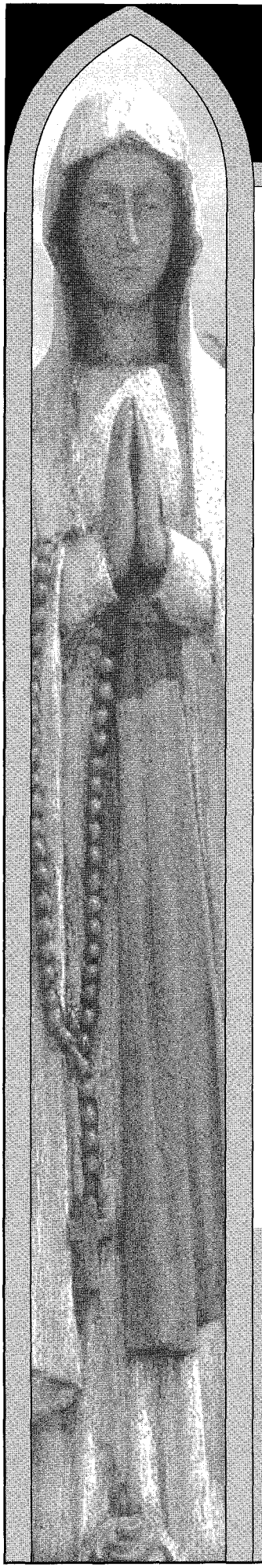

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